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DAUGHTERS OF BANBA

BY

MRS. THOMAS CONCANNON, M.A.

Author of "Women of Ninety-Eight,"
"The Life of St. Columban," Etc.

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To the Memory

OF THE

Unknown Women

FAITHFUL AND UNNUMBERED

WHO

IN EVERY AGE OF IRELAND'S AGE LONG STRUGGLE

HAVE DIED OF HUNGER AND HARDSHIP

BUT

ERE THEY WERE GATHERED

INTO THEIR FORGOTTEN GRAVES

PASSED ON

STILL LIVING

The Unconquerable Spirit

OF THE

Irish Race

CONTENTS

PAGES

INTRODUCTION ix

THE WOMEN OF THE IRISH SAGAS—I: . . 1–15

Meaning of ancient Irish women's names—Pictures rather than " symphonies "—Description of Princess Etain—Feminine ideal of the Ancient Irish—" Six Gifts of Womanhood "—Character sketch of Queen Medbh—Anti-feminism in the Irish Sagas—The Story of Deirdre and the sons of Usnach—Masculine and feminine conception of love—Cynical portraiture of Gráinne.

THE WOMEN OF THE IRISH SAGAS.—II: . 16–30

L'Amour Courtois anticipated in the story of Cuchulainn and Emer—Cuchulainn the first of the *Frauenritter*—Chivalric education of Cuchulainn completed by Emer—The Wooing of Emer—" The War of Words of the Women of Ulster "—The " Lamentation of Emer "—Mother love a rare *motif* in Irish Sagas—Story of Nessa—A Sister's Story—Sketch of Fionnghuala in the *Fate of the Children of Lir.*

THE HOLY WOMEN OF THE GAEL: . . 31–46

Women Saints " racy of the soil "—Gaelic savour of the legends of the women saints of Ireland—St. Brigid—Her influence on the development of Irish ideals—St. Ita, the fosterer of boy saints—Stories of St. Ita and St. Clare—Humanity of the Irish Saints—Story of St. Brigid of Opaca and her brother, St. Andrew—St. Gobnait of Ballyvourney—Story of St. Cruimtheris—" Eithne the Fair and Feilimy the Ruddy."

THE MOTHERS OF THE SAINTS OF ERIN: . 47–60

" My son is my voice "—The Mother of St. Comghall—The Mother of St. Colmcille—The Mother of St. Brendan the Voyager—The Mother of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise—The Mother of St. Columban—The Mother of St. Senan—The Mother of St. Mochua of Balla.

PAGES

THE WOMEN OF THE CASTLES . . . 61–81

Rôle of a Lady of the Castle—Description of Life in Mediaeval Irish Castles—"Sources" for "A Coshering"—Hospitality—"Feasts of Bestowing"—Margaret O'Carroll—Lady Margaret Fitzgerald—Lady Eleanor Fitzgerald—Finola O'Connor—Finola O'Brien—Inghin Dubh—Romantic Love Stories—*Eibhlín a Rúin—Una Bhán.*

THE WOMEN OF THE TOWNS: . . . 82–105

Young Girls—Description of Dress—The Women of New Ross—"Valentines"—Betrothals—Marriages—Home Life in Mediaeval Irish towns—Munificence of townsmen—Margaret Athy—Margaret Joyce—Hospitals—Christening Feasts—Education—Distinguished Waterford Families—The Waddings—A Catholic Mother—Gifts to the Church—"My Lady Mayoress"—The destruction of the towns: Drogheda, Wexford, Galway, Cork—Sufferings and heroism of the Women—"The Women of Limerick."

COUNTRYWOMEN: 106–125

Aristocratic view-point of Irish littérateurs—Life on an old Irish Farm—A Country girl in Ancient Ireland—Ethna and King Cormac—Country life mirrored in "Lives of Saints"—Indomitable Spirit of Irish Countrywomen—"Foster Mothers"—Luke Gernon's description of Country Life—What the Countrywomen have done and suffered for God and Ireland.

THE WOMEN OF THE CLOISTERS: . . 126–169

I.—Obscurity of history of nuns in mediaeval Ireland—Rare references to, in *Annals*—Suggested explanation—Augustinian Canonesses—Benedictines—Cistercians—Margaret Barnewall—Honora de Burgo.

II.—Origin of Irish Poor Clares—Gravelines—Dunkirk—Nieuport—Dublin—Narration ascribed to Mother Mary Bonaventure Brown—Life at "Bethlehem"—Convent attacked by Puritans—Galway—Wexford—The coming of Cromwell.

III.—Irish Poor Clares die in Spain—Mother Cicely Francis Dillon—Mother Catherine Bernard Browne—Sister Margaret Clare Jonyne—Sister Elizabeth

PAGES

THE WOMEN OF THE CLOISTERS—*Continued.*

Baptist Lynch—Sister Colette Blake—Sister Julian Anthony Blake—Sister Apollonia O'Connor—Spirit of Perfection of Irish Poor Clares.

IV.—Restoration of Convent of Poor Clares in Galway—Gifts of Mother Bonaventure Brown—Nuns' Island—Market Street—Narration of Mother Baptist Clancy—Poor Clares in Dublin.

V.—Establishment of Dominican Nuns in Galway—Some distinguished members of Community—In Exile—Mother Mary O'Halloran—Madame Mary Blake—Return of Exiled nuns of 1698—The Penal Days—Establishments in Dublin, Drogheda, Waterford.

VI.—Project for establishment of Irish Benedictines at Dunkirk—Dame Mary Joseph O'Ryan—Dame Alexia Mary Legge—Visit to Ypres—"Irish Dames of Ypres"—Dame O'Ryan establishes Convent in Channel Row—Rival Establishment in Ship Street—Death Bill of Dame O'Ryan.

WOMEN IN EXILE—I: 170–183

Misery of exiled Irishwomen—Famine in Munster—Johanna Mac Swiney—Massacre of Dursey Island—Margaret Barnewall's little maid—The ladies of the "Flight"—The Countess Catherine, wife of Hugh O'Neill—Brigid O'Neill.

WOMEN IN EXILE—II: 184–208

Nuala O'Donnell—"The Flight of the Earls"—Death of Irish Lords in Rome—"O Woman of the Piercing Wail"—Story of Mary Stuart (*alias* O'Donnell)—Lady Rosa O'Doherty—Irish Exiles in France—Irish women sent as slaves to the Barbadoes.

WITH THE WILD GEESE: . . . 209–227

"The Women's Parting Wail"—Sufferings of wives and children of Irish soldiers in foreign service—Lady Honora de Burgo, wife of Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan—Madame Misset and the escape of Princess Clementina—Irish Nuns in French Convents—Romances.

PAGES

WOMEN POETS AND POETS' WOMEN: . . 228–248

Immemorial connection between Woman and Poetry —Professional women poets—Liadain—Queen Gormlaith—Princess Crede—*Dirge of Art O'Leary*—*Laments* of other O'Connell ladies—Some Irish Poetesses of the eighteenth century—Anonymous love poetry by women—Women sung by Turlogh O'Carolan—Brigid Cruise—Mary Maguire—Madam Mac Dermott.

THE WOMEN OF THE WARS: . . . 249–266

Women warriors in ancient Ireland—Gráinne Ní Mháille—Rosa, wife of Fiach O'Byrne—Life at Ballinacor described by poets—Wife of Ruairí O'Moore—Heroism of Catherine Tyrrell—"Free Quarters" during Danish and Elizabethan Wars—Captain Cuellar's experiences—"I am O'Cahan's wife"—Pictures from the Cromwellian transplantation—Conclusion.

INDEX 267–275

INTRODUCTION

IT is usually around the men of a country that its history is written; whence it comes to pass that but half of its history is written, and that half, perhaps, not the more important. If we would understand a nation, it is necessary to know what wars it waged, their causes and their issues; how it was governed; and what relations bound it to other nations. And these things we learn from the story of its rulers, and statesmen, and soldiers. But it is even more necessary to know how its people lived, and what they made of life, and the problems that perplex it—the "riddles of love, and pain, and death"; what things they held "of good repute"; what ideals they cherished; and what mission they set themselves to fulfil. And these things must be studied in the homes of the people, and in the lives of the women who make or mar them. "A nation," some one has said, "is what its women make its men."

In the present book an attempt has been made to supplement the knowledge of Ireland's history contained in the ordinary text-books by bringing into greater relief the figures of some of her women. It is, of necessity, too fragmentary to call itself a history of Ireland centring around the women of Ireland—though that is the ideal which presided over its conception. For reasons of space it has proved impossible to bring the record down later than the eighteenth century.

To understand any nation we must understand its women. But in the case of Ireland, the necessity is peculiarly great. It is always as a woman that her lovers have thought of her. "The Irish delight," says Augustin

Thierry, " in regarding their country as a being capable of inspiring affection and reciprocating attachment. They love to address her without pronouncing her name, and to mingle with the austere and perilous devotion of which she is the object whatever is tenderest and happiest in the heart's affections." In the ancient, splendid days they saw her under the semblance of some proud, warrior queen. " Banba is my name," said the royal lady, whom the sons of Miledh found on the heights of Sliabh Mis with her women and her druids, " and it is from me that this island is called the Isle of Banba." Then they proceeded to Sliabh Eibhlinne where they met Fodla, and Amergin asked her her name. " Fodla is my name," she said, " and it is from me that this land is called Fodla." They proceeded thence to Uisneach in Meath where they met Eire. The poet asked her her name. " Eire is my name," said she, " and it is from me that this land is called Eire." In later days of defeat and sorrow her poets found other names for her : " Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call me Cathleen the daughter of Hoolihan." Other some there were who did not even dare to pronounce a name for her ; but hid it under some symbol mystic and beautiful. But whether they sang of

" The Brightness of Brightness met on the lonely way,"

or the " Little Black Rose," whose " holy, delicate, white hands should girdle them with steel "—always into the lovely vision her poets had glimpsed of Ireland there were gathered the features of dear, mortal women—real Irish girls whom they had known and loved. Sometimes the reality and the symbol are so interfused that we cannot separate them. Was it Nuala, " the daughter of O'Donnell," whom Eoghan Ruadh Mac a Bhaird saw on the heights of the Janiculum, raising her " piercing

wail " over the lonely graves of her kinsmen—or was it Ireland, solitary among the nations, unconsoled, mourning her dead and exiled sons? Was it Fionnghuala, the daughter of Lir, who, for centuries unnumbered,

" Ice pierced on perilous coasts
To land and sky,
Lifted the swan-song of her grief
Yet could not die."

Or was it Ireland—as one of the truest of her poet daughters would have us believe—finding in the *finis* of the old sorrowful story, a message of Ireland's destiny:

" And yet the spell of hatred fell
Through centuries long
Harmed not the everlasting soul
Or power of song,
And we who grieve for bleeding breast
And broken wing,
Shall see her rise in beauty yet
The Child of the King." [1]

HELENA CONCANNON.

Lios na Mara,
Salthill, Galway,
November, 1921.

[1] Miss Alice Milligan's " Fionnuala."

I DESIRE to make grateful acknowledgment of the help received from many friends during the preparation of this book. I owe special thanks to Mother Abbess and Community of the Poor Clares, Galway, for permission to make use of their "Annals," and other documents deposited in their Archives—and to Father Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., who not only procured these documents for me, but placed at my disposal, with extreme generosity, the results of his own laborious researches in many continental archives. I am indebted to the Jesuit Fathers, Galway, for the loan of many rare volumes from their collection; and to Professor John Howley, M.A., and his courteous assistant, Mr. M. J. Fahy, for special facilities kindly afforded me in using the resources of Galway University College Library.

H. C.

The Women of the Irish Sagas

I

IF "heard hardly" in the melodious speech of the Blessed Damozel, the "virginal chaste names" of the five handmaidens of the Lady Mary in the Paradisial Groves

> ". . . are five sweet symphonies:—
> Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
> Margaret and Rosalys."

the names with which the Old Irish crowned the beauty of their women are veritable pictures. Fionnghuala,[1] Finabhair,[2] Blathnait,[3] Muirgeal,[4]—the cadenced syllables fall musical enough on ears to which they are but sounds. But to the understanding Gael the music is less than the picture. As he hears them there come forth for him from high burial cairns (where they have been dust for nigh two thousand years!) clad again in their blonde, blossom-like, foam-bright beauty, the Princesses who wore them as part of their own loveliness. Etain comes once more from fairyland, and stands again by the edge of the well in the forest, where in the lovely morning-tide, centuries

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Authorities: "Táin Bo Cuailgne" (Windisch's Edition); "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne" (edited by S. H. O'Grady); "Bricriu's Feast" (Henderson's edition); the versions of the following tales in Miss Hull's "Cuchullin Saga": The Tragical Death of the Sons of Usnach, The Wooing of Emer, The Birth of Conachar; "The Tragical Fate of the Children of Lir" (Duffy's Edition); Miss Hull's "Pagan Ireland"; Lady Gregory's "Cuchulain of Muirthemne."

[1] "White-shouldered."

[2] Miss Hull interprets as "fair-beamed."

[3] "Little Blossom."

[4] "Sea-bright."

ago, King Eochaid, finding her, gave her his love for ever : " She stood at the edge of the well, combing her hair with a bright silver comb adorned with gold. The hue of her hair was like the flower of the iris in summer, or like red gold after burnishing. . . White as the snow of one night were her two hands, and red as the foxglove her two clear fair cheeks. Blue as the hyacinth her eyes. Red as the rowan-berry her lips. The bright radiance of the moon was in her noble face ; soft womanly dignity in her voice ; her steps were stately and slow, as the gait of a queen. Verily, of the world's women she was the dearest and loveliest and most perfect that the eye of man had ever beheld. ' Dear and shapely,' men said of her, ' are all women until Etain comes beside them.' " [1]

For one, to whom, as we are told, " the half-said thing was ever dearest," it is curious to find what infinite pains of elaboration the old Gael took when he would render forth—as he does for all time in that picture of Etain—his ideal of feminine loveliness. He rifled the world of its treasures for his lady's adornment : jewels and precious metals ablaze in the sun ; the sheen of silk ; the richness of regal colours. From " the snow of one night," pure and yet untrodden, he took his pigments for " the treasured splendour, her hand." He gathered the blue of the hyacinth to paint her eyes, the red of the rowan berry for her lips, the soft blush of the foxglove for her cheeks. The moon herself, as she slowly climbed the sky, had to lend her aid to make others see as the old Gael saw, the radiance of his lady's face, the slow stately step of her—" the gait of a queen." But even then the lovely picture was not complete. The last touch was only added when he gave her her lovely name.

We find ourselves repeating those beautiful old Irish

[1] Quoted in Miss Hull's " Pagan Ireland," p. 124, from the " Story of Ailill and Etain."

names over and over again for our own sheer delight in them—and perhaps not without a hope of reviving them again for new use in the New Ireland of to-day and to-morrow. What a gracious pledge of the sweetness, and purity, and poetry of our future civilisation would be offered if the little maidens whose delicate hands shall have, under God, so large a part in the moulding of it, were called by the old names whose meaning would be a constant inspiration. Could a girl called Binne ("Melody") fail to cultivate the gift of "voice and sweet speech," which were reckoned by the Old Irish two of the six gifts of womanhood.[1] Could Eimear be other than "gentle," or Medbh, "tender," or Muirne full of "affection"? In Aille we should have "Beauty" herself. Blathnait and Scoithin ought to be as sweet and lovely as flowers. Eithne, whose name signifies primarily "nut-kernel," would understand that "knowledge" found therein its symbol. Symbolic, too, would be the name of Gráinne, taken first from the "grain of corn." The sun would give a name to Grian; and some of his splendour would shine around Niamh. Brigid would be "an arrow of fire," and Ita's "thirst for God" would gain her name to her.[2]

It is very curious and interesting to observe that the old Gael, not content with defining the "six gifts of womanhood"—and with them his feminine ideal—so often chose the names of some of these "gifts" as the names of his women. In the old tale *The Wooing of Emer* these six gifts are set forth: the gift of beauty, the gift of voice, the gift of sweet speech, the gift of needlework, the gift of

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[1] There is in the *Tdin* (p. 29) a charming comparison for a woman's voice: "as melodious as the strings of a harp when they are swept by the skilful fingers of accomplished masters was the musical sound of her voice and her courteous speech."

[2] Most of these interpretations are taken from Thomas O'Flannery's "For the Tongue of the Gael," p. 84.

wisdom, the gift of chastity.[1] A very beautiful ideal is thus disclosed ; and if it were not always realised, the fact does not detract from the honour it does to our ancestors who, while yet pagan, conceived it.

For it is not to be denied that the women made known to us by the Irish Sagas (and that so vividly that we feel at times as if we had seen them in the flesh) did not always live up to the gracious significance of their names. The thought may keep us from expecting too much from a revival of them. We have Mr. Yeats to remind us that

> " Under her cairn-crowned grassy hill
> Passionate Maeve is stony still "

and has so lain for centuries. But as she flashes past us in her war-chariot, the central figure in the great procession of majestic pageantry which fills the *Táin*, there seems to be thrown from it a dazzling protest against the meanings philologists would attach to her name : " For thus it was that Medbh was ever accustomed to ride forth : nine chariots for herself alone ; that is to say, two chariots before her, and two behind and two at either side of her, and her own chariot in the midst of them all. And for this cause Medbh acted thus : namely, that neither earth-clods from the horse's hoofs, nor froth from the mouth-bits of their bridles, nor the dust and waste of a great host and mighty army might soil her royal diadems."[2] What has she to do with tenderness this tall, proud, angry, passionate woman whom Cethern's description brings so vividly before us : " Then came at me a beautiful, pale, long-faced woman, with long flowing yellow hair on her, a purple cloak with a brooch of gold over her breast, and a straight spear red-flaming in her hand."[3] Little love or tenderness, but mighty forces of passion and pride in

[1] See Miss Hull's " Cuchullin Saga," p. 61, and Lady Gregory's " Cuchulain of Muirthemne," p. 22.
[2] *Tdin*, p. 85. [3] *Ib.* p. 614.

the heart that royal hued mantle covers! Very ruthless to strike down her enemies is the hand that grasps the flaming spear. The whole *Táin* is motived by her pride.[1] The land must run red with blood; old friendships and loyalties must be violated; the honour of women, the faith of men must be sacrificed that her whim may be appeased. When the end has come, and her host returns to Cruachan, a broken force under the humiliating safe-conduct of the great foe, her pride and self-will are still unbroken. Of the troops who had marched with her from Cruachan "little recked she who returned, or who did not return thither, so long as there came to it the Brown Bull of Cuailgne, as she had sworn."[2]

The figure of Medbh in the *Táin* is an extraordinary achievement in character-drawing. But it is not to be forgotten that the drawing is the work of her enemies. Perhaps if the Sagas of her own race had been preserved, we might have gathered a different impression of her. As it is we can only think of her as the *Táin* shows her to us; and so lifelike is the drawing, with such skilful artistry of detail is it finished, that our belief in its truth is caught and held fast. This tawny-haired queen, with her long face pale with passion, stands forth against the legendary past, more vividly than Elizabeth of England against the historic, in which she might have been Medbh's re-incarnation. Out of her own mouth Medbh is made to bear witness against herself. Her own account of her girlhood[3] shows her even then proud, vehement, passionate, impatient of all control, insistent on the first place. Illustrious as was her race, she was the most illustrious of its members. Of her six sisters—daughters of Eochaid the High-King—she boasted of being the noblest and most distinguished. "I was the best of them in generosity and gift-spending. I was the best

[1] *Táin*, p. 11. [2] *Ib.* p. 885. [3] *Ib.* p. 4 *et seq.*

of them in battle, and combat and strife." Her household of warriors was greater than any of theirs. To her there came from all parts of the land the noblest of princes as suitors. But none of them will she have—" for I was one who required an unwonted bride-gift : a man without avarice, without jealousy, without fear." Her curious reasons for her choice of a husband give further insight into her character. " For it would not be seemly for me to be with a man that would be close-handed, for my own hand is open in wage-paying and in free-giving ; and it would be a reproach in my husband if I were a better wage-payer than himself. And it would not be fitting for me to be with a man that would be cowardly, for I myself go into struggles and fights and battles."

At first sight it may appear that the figure of Medbh in the *Táin* gives the lie direct to what I have said of the old Irish and their ideals of womanhood. On a closer view it will, I think, be found but to confirm it. This Amazonian queen, and all she stands for, meets with scant favour from the redactor of the *Táin*. He was what is popularly, if unphilosophically, called an " Anti-feminist." The *Táin* itself is full of *Tendenz*. " Behold," it would seem to say to us, " whither the emancipation of women would lead us." The redactor has no approval for that strange old marriage contract called *Lanamnas fir for bantinacur*,[1] which set " the man in the place of the woman, and the woman in the place of the man," and of which Medbh's marriage with Ailill is a striking example. He treats Ailill with a certain kindly contempt, but shows plainly that he considers Findbennach (the Whitehorned Bull) to have a truer conception of male dignity. Findbennach was the calf of a cow belonging to Medbh, " but he did not like to be *for bantinachur* " (*i.e.* " on woman's property,") and so he left the

[1] *Senchus Mór*, Vol. II, p. 390. *Lit.* " marriage of a man on woman's property."

herds of the Queen and "betook himself amongst those of the King." [1] "And it was to Medbh, as if (in spite of all her treasures) she were penniless because she had not such a bull."

As for Medbh's boasting of going into "struggles and fights and battles," let us see (the redactor seems to say to us) how much there is in it. He takes a malicious delight in showing us how extremely unwilling this brave-spoken Queen was to risk her own precious person. Even the pathos of her half-remorseful appeal to the Druid (when before the start of the expedition to gain possession of the Brown Bull of Cuailgne, she goes to him to inquire as to its issue) is not left unspoiled. "Many part to-day," she said, "from their dear ones, and from their friends, from home and country, from father and mother, and if they do not return in full health, on me will fall their sighs and their curses. *Nevertheless there goes not forth, nor remains at home anyone dearer to us than we ourselves are;* and so thou shalt discover for us whether we shall return, or shall not return." [2] In another place [3] she is made to utter her pre-eminent regard for her own safety, even more bluntly: "That is most certainly not our wish that we should bleed, or be stained with red at another's hands after our coming into this strange province—viz., Uladh. More pleasant it will be to us to make others bleed."

A certain misogyny (of which the contemptuous *dicta* about women ascribed to King Cormac, are the supreme expression) is not absent from other specimens of Old Irish Literature. Even some of the most exquisite love-tales, those of Deirdre, for instance, or of Ailinn—are tinged with it. The beauty of a woman's face instead of being as a shining candle to guide men's wanderings to the haven of home, or as a star to turn their eyes

[1] *Táin*, p. 13. [2] *Ib.* p. 27. [3] *Ib.* p. 74.

heavenward, is like the flaming torch that, thrown among their passions, kindled the fire in which—

> "Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam
> And Usna's children died."

"True it is," said Cathbad, prophecying to Feidlimidh's wife before the birth of her daughter, Deirdre, "that there will be evil on account of her beauty." "And, oh! Deirdre," he said, "the Ultonians shall suffer in thy time, and for thee the three sons of Uislé shall go into exile; a wicked deed shall be perpetrated in Emhainn; and the sons of kings shall fall as a consequence of it; through thee shall happen the exile of Fergus, and the slaying of Fiacha, and of Gere, and of Eoghan." [1]

It is for the most part a tragic business, love, in the eyes of the writers of the Old Irish Romances. Inexorable as pain or death, its sisters, it summons Deirdre from the guarded shelter of the *lis* King Conchobar had built for her fostering, and banishes Naisi and his brethren from the company of their fellows and the dear soil of Erin, and forces them to live as hunted fugitives in a strange land. "There will be evil of it," said Ainlé and Ardan when Naisi told them of Deirdre's love for him. Yet they, too, knew that the doom must be accepted.[2]

By touches which put this old tale of a primitive civilisation very high in the world's literature we are made to feel how differently men and women think of love. For Naisi love is, indeed, but a part of life; for Deirdre it is the whole. Never during the years he spends in exile for it does Naisi forget the greatness of the price he has paid. His thoughts turn longingly to his native land. His homesick ears know the first cry of Fergus for "the cry of a man of Erin." [3] "Not so," said

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[1] Lady Gregory's "Cuchulain of Muirthemne," p. 105.
[2] *Ib.* p. 113.
[3] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 29.

Deirdre, trying to distract him with the interest of the chess-board, "let us play on." "Fergus sent forth a third cry, and the sons of Usnach knew for a certainty that this was the cry of Fergus"—and the game is left unfinished, and Deirdre's power—the power of a woman's love—is conquered by the greater might, the love of home and country. "Better than everything is one's native land," says Fergus (knowing the right note to strike from the pathetic eagerness of the sons of Usnach 'to hear tidings of Erin, and of Ulster in special') "for poor is every excellence and prosperity to him who sees not his native land." "That is true," said Naisi, "for dearer is Erin to myself than Alba, though I should obtain a greater share of Alba's goods."

As for Deirdre, the land she loved was the land where she had lived with her beloved. "And Deirdre (as they passed over the sea and the mighty ocean) looked behind her at the coasts of Alba, and she cried, 'My love to thee, O land of the East! It is sad for me to leave the sides of thy havens and thy bays, thy smooth-flowered, delightful, lovely plains, and thy bright-green-sided hills.'" [1] And the spirit of song comes upon her (as later the spirit of prophecy) and she sings of the places dear to her for dear Love's sake:

> "A lovable land is yon eastern land
> Alba with its marvels.
> I would not have come out of it
> Had I not come with Naisi."

One by one she counts them over—the Duns and the Glens and the Strands where she had lived a happy wife: Dunfidge and Dunfinn, and Dun-Suibni; the cliffs of Glen Laid, and Glen Mesan of the tall garlic and the white branches; the peeks over Glen da Rua, sweet with

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[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 31.

the first notes of "the cuckoo on bending bough," and above all—

> "Glenn Etive!
> Where my first house I raised;
> Beauteous its wood:—upon rising
> A cattle-fold for the sun is Glenn Etive."

"Glenn Etive where my first house I raised!" It is the cry of the woman, the home-maker, and Mr. Yeats has judged truly of Deirdre when he speaks of her as one "who might be some mild modern housewife but for her prophetic wisdom."[1] Much of the beauty of her Lamentation (set by the same discriminating critic "among the greatest lyric poems of the world") arises from the exquisite pictures she etches of the home made by her, for her husband and his brethren in the forest. "Three spacious hunting booths they had," the tale informs us, "and the booth in which they ate, in that they slept not"; and Deirdre calls up for us many a lovely evening scene in their woodland life. She pictures herself alone in the cooking-booth preparing the hot baths which always awaited the brothers at their return from the chase. At last she hears the sound for which she had been listening—the songs of the home-coming hunters: the wave-voice (*i.e.* bass) of Naisi, Ardan's baritone and the tenor of Ainlé mingling in delightful harmony. "Sweet in the house of Conar, the flutes and horns played by musicians—yet have I heard music far sweeter, the singing of the sons of Usnach." And now the singing comes nearer and nearer, and the heroes enter. "Naisi bearing the mead, Ardan an ox or a boar of excellent size, Ainlé a faggot on his stately back." "Sweet though the excellent mead be found—Drunk by the son of Ness—I, in a time that is past, have found more agreeable—An abundant sustenance that was yet more sweet. . .

[1] Preface to Lady Gregory's "Cuchulain of Muirthemne," p. xx.

When in the forest the noble Naisi—Had laid on the faggots logs hewn by the warriors—More pleasant than other provant—I found the game taken in the chase by the sons of Usnach." [1]

It is not altogether because they are fond of showing the sorrow love so often brings in its train, that the old Irish romance-writers' opinion of woman and the emotion she inspires seems to us so unfavourable. It is only a people with an ignoble view of life who look on pain, and sorrow and death as essential evils. The ancient Irish were not stained with that baseness. They knew that pain could be a very precious thing, and death a noble and splendid good. The real tragedy that underlies the most tragic of the old sorrowful love tales of the Gael is the doubt suggested in them—a doubt which in some of them and notably *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne* becomes almost an articulate question: is woman worth it? The unpleasant traits of Gráinne's character, the cynical ending to her story seem emphasised with the express intention of making the answer in the negative quite unequivocal.

Here, too, love is looked upon as an inexorable doom. But while in the story of Deirdre it is a doom under which the woman suffers as well as the man, and of which she is a victim as innocent and therefore as pathetic—in the story of Gráinne the sorcery of the woman is regarded as the evil cause. "I put thee under bonds of danger and destruction, O Diarmuid—that is, under the bond of *Dromdraoidheachta*—if thou take me not with thee out of this household to-night, ere Fionn and the king of Erin arise out of that sleep," says Gráinne to Diarmuid when—at the banquet King Cormac had made to welcome Fionn to Tara for his wooing of Gráinne [2]—she had drugged

[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 50.
[2] "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne," p. 55.

all but a few of the guests to gain her purpose. In vain Diarmuid protests: Fionn were a fitter lover; in vain he shows the difficulties of the elopement—the keys of Teamhair in Fionn's possession, Diarmuid's own *geas* against passing through any "door of evasion." "Howbeit I hear," says Gráinne, "that every warrior and battle-champion can pass by the shafts of his javelins and by the staves of his spears, in and out over the ramparts of every fort and city, and I will pass out by the 'door of evasion,' and do thou follow me."

Then Diarmuid turned for advice to his comrades: "'O Oisin, son of Fionn, what shall I do with these bonds that have been laid upon me?' 'Thou art not guilty of the bonds which have been laid upon thee,' said Oisin, 'and I tell thee to follow Gráinne and keep thyself well against the wiles of Fionn.' 'O Oscar, son of Oisin, what is good for me to do as to those bonds which have been laid upon me?' 'I tell thee to follow Gráinne,' said Oscar, 'for he is a sorry wretch that fails to keep his bonds.' 'What counsel givest thou me, O Diorruing?' 'I tell thee to follow Gráinne, albeit thy death will come of it, and I grieve for it,' said Diorruing," and he spoke out of the fulness of his druid knowledge of the future. "'Is that the counsel of you all to me?' said Diarmuid. 'It is,' said Oisin, and said all the others together. . . ." "After that Diarmuid arose and stood, and stretched forth his active warrior hand over his broad weapons and took leave and farewell of Oisin and of the chiefs of the Fenians; and not bigger is a crimson whortleberry than was each tear that Diarmuid shed from his eyes at parting from his people." [1]

So he goes forth an unwilling lover—knowing that nothing but evil must come to him from what he is being forced to do.

[1] "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne," p. 59.

Sixteen years of outlawry follow, during which Diarmuid is pursued relentlessly by the enmity of Fionn. A thousand fights he must sustain against foes mustered against him by Fionn from the farthest places. Always must he bear in mind the counsel of Aonghus: never to go into a tree having but one trunk in flying before Fionn, and never to go into a cave to which there was but one door; and never to go into an island of the sea to which there was but one chann l; and in whatever place he cooked his meal, there never to eat it; and in whatever place he ate, there never to sleep; and in whatever place he lay down to sleep, there never to rise in the morning." [1] For the chase that slackened not was ever at his heels. Yet to these dangers Gráinne's whims added new ones. He must break his compact with the Searbhan Lochlannach, who had befriended him when Fionn had outlawed him, and do battle with him, and slay him that she might satisfy her longing to eat of the berries of the quicken-tree.[2] When at last, through the good offices of Aonghus, peace is made between Diarmuid on the one hand, and Fionn and Cormac on the other, and long years of prosperity seemed destined for Diarmuid, again Gráinne's headstrong determination to have her own way wrecks the fair prospects, and brings about the fatal *dénouement*—the slaying of Diarmuid by the wild boar of Beann Gulbain.

"Then Gráinne spoke to Diarmuid upon a certain day, and what she said was, that it was a shame for them, seeing the number of their people, and the greatness of their household, and that their expenditure was untold, that the two best men in Eire had never been in their house—that is, Cormac, the son of Art, and Fionn Mac Cumhail—'Wherefore sayest thou so, O Gráinne,' said Diarmuid, 'when they are enemies to me?' 'I would fain,' said Gráinne, 'give them a feast that so thou

[1] *Ib.* p. 77. [2] *Ib.* p. 137.

mightest win their love.' "[1] The feast is given—and Fionn, having partaken of it for a year, repays the hospitality he has enjoyed by treacherously "making the hunt of Beann Gulbain," in which he knew Diarmuid must perish.[2] The extravagance of Gráinne's grief at the death of Diarmuid but brings out in stronger relief the baseness of her subsequent conduct. "She uttered a long exceedingly piteous cry, so that it was heard in the distant parts of the *rath*; and her women and the rest of her people came to her, and asked her what had thrown her into that excessive grief. Gráinne told them how that Diarmuid had perished by the wild boar of Beann Gulbain, by means of the hunt that Fionn had made. 'And truly my very heart is grieved,' quoth Gráinne, 'that I am not able myself to fight with Fionn, for were I so I would not have suffered him to leave this place in safety.' " Not being able to fight Fionn herself, she sends for her sons and urges on them the duty of avenging their father —and in token of that duty she gives them of their father's possessions, 'his arms, and his armour, and his shield and his various sharp weapons.' But she herself (prudent woman) "keeps his goblet and drinking horns, his beautiful golden-chased cups and the kine and cattle-herds *undivided.*"[3]

That touch which shows Gráinne stained with greed, the lowest of the vices, prepares us for the final cynicism:

"When Fionn saw that Oisin, and Oscar and all the Clanna Baoisgne had abandoned him (on account of the death of Diarmuid) he considered within himself that he would be unable to crush that danger if he might not win over Gráinne, and thereupon he got him to Rath Gráinne without the knowledge of the Fianna, and greeted her craftily and cunningly, and with sweet words. Gráinne neither heeded nor hearkened to him, but told him to

[1] *Ib.* p. 173. [2] *Ib.* p. 183. [3] *Ib.* p. 205.

leave her sight, and straightway assailed him with her *keen, very sharp-pointed tongue.* However, Fionn left not plying her with sweet words and with gentle, loving discourse until he brought her to his own way of thinking, and she consented to become his wife. After that Fionn and Gráinne went their ways until they reached the Fianna. And when these saw Fionn and Gráinne coming towards them, they gave one shout of derision and mockery at her, so that Gráinne bowed her head through shame. 'We trow, O Fionn,' quoth Oisin, 'that thou wilt keep Gráinne well from henceforth.'" [1]

So the story of Gráinne, "sad, and fair and fickle-hearted" ends amid the shouts of derision of those very heroes who had favoured her flight with her young lover years before; and now her memory lives as

> "The false wife of the slain man plighted
> Unto Fionn who slew." [2]

[1] *Ib.* p. 209.

[2] Miss Milligan's "Hero Lays."

The Women of the Irish Sagas

II

FORTUNATELY the cynicism which inspired the creation of the character of Gráinne is not universal in early Irish literature. Sometimes it is acknowledged that Woman *is* worth fighting for, worth enduring hardships for—a flame-like inspiration towards great warrior deeds. The acknowledgment is nobly made in the lovely old tale of *The Wooing of Emer*; and here as so often happens in Old Irish literature, we seem to find centuries before it makes its appearance in the commonwealth of general European Letters, a *motif* which was to be handled so often during the ages of chivalry that we have come to regard it as the most characteristic expression of their poetry and their whole conception of life. While the ending of the tale of Gráinne anticipates the contemptuous verdict on women of the mediaeval French *Fabliaux*, in the story of Cuchulainn's courtship of Emer we have a conception of love which seems to contain the original germ of *l'amour courtois*. By deeds of knightly valour the lover must prove himself worthy of his chosen lady ere he wins her; and so love becomes the source and inspiration of the chivalric virtues: honour, and bravery, generosity and self-restraint, reverence for all women for one peerless woman's sake. Though he knew it not, Ulrich von Lichtenstein, riding forth on his *Frauendienst* in the mid-years of the thirteenth century, was but following a path that had been broken by our Irish hero more than a thousand years earlier.[1] Cuchulainn

[1] It is true that Ulrich consciously modelled himself on a Celtic hero, Tristan. The whole subject of the influence of Irish thought on European development invites thorough investigation.

was the first of the *Frauenritter*—the knightly company, who achieved great deeds of " derring-do,' to make themselves worthy of the gentle ladies to whom they vowed their service.

It is, I acknowledge, not quite fair to set Ulrich von Lichtenstein, whose fantastic adventures, related by himself in his *Frauendienst* (*lit.* " Service of Ladies ") are the *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole system, side by side with Cuchulainn, and then, on the strength of an unjust comparison, claim for our early Irish conception of *Frauendienst* a universal superiority over the German. And yet it seems to me we have some reason to recognise in the old Irish story a point of view which differentiates it, to its own honour, from the tales of knight-errantry, real or invented, in which the mediaeval European aristocracy saw mirrored its own conception of love and life. It is a very fine and philosophic idea to make love, as is done in *The Wooing of Emer*, the coping-stone of a knightly education. To the training of Cuchulainn the greatest experts in the land had, each in his own art, lent their aid. " Truly," says Cuchulainn to Emer, " it is not as a churl strives to bring up his children, between the flags and the kneading-trough, between the fire and the wall, on the floor of one room that Conchobar has brought me up ; but it is among chariot-chiefs and heroes, among jesters and druids, among poets and learned men, among landowners and farmers of Ulster I have been reared, so that I have all their manners and their gifts." Then he specifies what he has learned from each : " Fair speaking Sencha taught me wisdom and right judgment ; Blai, lord of lands, my kinsman, took me to his house so that I have entertained the men of Conchobar's province ; Fergus brought me up to fights and battles, so that I am able to use my strength ; I stood by the knee of Amergin the poet ; he was my tutor, so that I can stand up to any man, I can make praises for the doings of a king. Finchoem helped

to rear me, so that Conall Cearnach is my foster-brother. Cathbad of the gentle face has taught me for the sake of Dechtire, so that I understand the art of the Druids, and I have learned all the goodness of knowledge. All the men of Ulster have had a hand in bringing me up, chariot-drivers and chiefs of chariots, so that I am the darling of the whole army so that I fight for the honour of all alike." [1] And yet, wide as this education was, it was not complete until Emer played her part in it. Not yet might Cuchulainn "reach to the strength of chariot-chiefs" until for her sweet sake he had confronted the dangers of the "Plain of Ill-luck," and the "Perilous Glen," and the "Bridge of the Cliff," which no man could cross until he had achieved valour; until he had learned champion-feats from Donall, and the women-warriors, Scathach and Aoifé; until he had fulfilled the three perilous tasks which Emer laid upon him, in mysterious poet language, as the condition for winning her.[2]

Very fine, too, is the idea which makes the maiden, whose love is to make perfect and complete the chivalric education given to Cuchulainn at the court of Conchobar, herself a paragon of maidenhood, and her bringing-up the complete realisation of the old Irish ideal of woman's education. Thus has she been brought up in the garden of Lugh: "in ancient virtues, in lawful behaviour, in the keeping of chastity, in rank equal to a queen, in stateliness of form, so that to her is attributed every noble grace of form among the host of women." [3] Hers are the six gifts of womanhood: "the gift of beauty, the gift of voice, the gift of sweet speech, the gift of needle-work, the gift of wisdom, the gift of chastity."

One of the conditions which differentiated *l'amour courtois* from what M. Alfred Jeanroy calls *l'amour fatal, inéluctable* of the ancients "who thought of love as some

[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 66. [2] *Ib.* p. 71 *et seq.* [3] *Ib.* p. 67.

mysterious malady, torturing and all-consuming, a punishment inflicted by some avenging god," is that it is freely given to an object freely chosen. In this respect, also, Cuchulainn's love for Emer anticipated *l'amour courtois*. " He had said that no maiden should go with him but she who was his equal in age and form and race, in skill and deftness, who was the best handiworker of the maidens of Erin, for that none but such as she were a fitting wife for him." [1] Far and wide throughout the land the king's messengers had travelled " to see if in any *dún*, or in any chief place in Erin they could find the daughter of a king, or of a hospitaller whom it might please Cuchulainn to woo." But they found her not, until news of Emer's infinite perfections reached the hero himself. Then he arrayed himself in his festal attire, mounted his chariot of speed, and rode swiftly forth to his wooing.

On the lawn before her father's *dún* Emer was seated, amidst her little court of maidens—daughters of neighbouring landowners who had come to her to learn needlework and fine handiwork—when, over the gentle murmur of their talk was borne to their ears the noise of the advancing chariot. She bade one of the maidens tell her who was coming towards them, and her sister, Fiall, laying aside her embroidery, climbed to the ramparts, and looking forth saw the gallant sight : a royal chariot drawn by noble steeds, wherein sat, behind his charioteer, " a dark, sad man, comeliest of the men of Erin," very splendid in crimson mantle, and gold-embroidered *léine*, and great breast-brooch of beaten gold. So in the royal pomp of youth the royal young lover comes.

" When Cuchulainn had come to the place where the maidens were, he wished a blessing to them.

" Emer lifted up her lovely face and saw him, and she said ' May God make smooth the path before you ! '

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[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 61.

" ' And you,' he answered, ' may you be safe from every harm ! ' "

Then for a little time they talked together in the secret language of the poets, and Cuchulainn asked her to be his wife, " for I have not hitherto found," he said, " a maiden capable of holding converse with me at a meeting in this wise." Emer tells the conditions on which alone he may win her, and Cuchulainn accepts them willingly. " Even as thou hast commanded, so shall all by me be done." [1]

She was to see her lover once more before he crossed the seas to meet the dangers her father's wiles had planned for his destruction. She was to have time to whisper a word of warning to him of the snares set for his feet, to give and to receive the plighted troth—and then to bid him farewell.

She had her own battles to fight, even though the peace of the Grianan and lawn, where her ordered days were spent, was not visibly broken by them. Forgall, her father, was bitterly opposed to her marriage with Cuchulainn. Not content with sending her betrothed into dangers from which it seemed, humanly speaking, impossible that he should ever return, Forgall tried to wed Emer to a great chief from Munster, Lugaid son of Nos, who had come northward seeking a wife. But Emer, when she was led forth from the Grianan to hold converse with Lugaid, told him she had pledged her troth to Cuchulainn, although her father was against him, and appealed to her new suitor not to force her to become his wife. The appeal was successful, and Lugaid left her free.

At length Cuchulainn returned home to Emain Macha, his education in championship complete ; and he lost little time at the court before setting out to seek Emer

[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 68.

at the rath of Forgall. But so closely guarded was the maiden that for a whole year he could get no sight of her.

At length he came one day to the *dún* in his scythe-chariot and when he got there " he leaped the hero-leap over the three walls, so that he was inside the court ; and then he made three attacks, so that eight men fell in each attack, but one escaped in every group of nine—that is the three brothers of Emer. And Forgall made a leap from the wall of the court to escape Cuchulainn, and he fell in the leap, and got his death in the fall."

" And then Cuchulainn went out again, and brought Emer with him and her foster-sister, and their two loads of gold and silver."

But he had many fights to sustain, so that the red sods flew and the fords ran dark with blood, ere he came with his bride to Emain Macha.

When next we see Emer it is in the dignity of her young wifehood, fighting for precedence over Fedelm " of the Fresh Heart," wife of Laegaire, and Lendabair, wife of Conall Cearnach, urged on by Bricriu at the feast [1] he made in his new palace at Dun Rudraige " to make strife between the champions of Ulster." He had failed to stir up among the men the fighting his bitter heart desired (though he had thrown the Champion's Portion among them as a veritable " bone of contention "), because the men were on their guard against him, and accepted the advice of Sencha. But with the women he had more success. To each of them, walking stately and aloof among her own attendant maidens, taking the pleasant air after the feast, he spoke words of praise of her beauty, her wisdom, her lineage, her husband's distinction. And he promised to each " the sovranty of queenship " over all the ladies of Ulster if she came first into the hall that night.

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[1] *Bricriu's Feast*, p. 17 *et seq.*

"The three companies thereupon went out till they met at one spot, to wit three ridges from the hall. None of them wot that Bricriu had incited them one against the other. To the hall they straightway return. Even and graceful and easy their carriage on the first ridge; scarcely did one of them raise a foot before the other. But on the ridge following their steps were shorter and quicker. Moreover on the ridge next the house it was with difficulty each kept up with the other. The amount of confusion then caused by the competition to enter the hall first was, as it were, the noise of fifty chariots approaching. The whole palace shook, and the warriors sprang to their arms.

"'Stay,' quoth Sencha, 'they are not enemies who have come; it is Bricriu who has set a-quarrelling the women who have gone out. By the gods of my people, unless the hall be closed against them, our dead will outnumber our living.'" Thereupon the doorkeepers close the door. Emer, by reason of her speed, outran the others and put her back against the door, and called to the doorkeepers before the other women came up, so that the men rose, each of them to open the door for his own wife, so that she might be the first to come within.

"'Quiet yourselves,' said Sencha, 'it is not a war of arms we are going to have here, it is a war of words!' Each woman then put herself under the protection of her husband outside, and there followed the war of words of the women of Ulster."

Out of this war Emer emerged the victor.

As the drama of Cuchulainn's destiny moves to its tragic conclusion, we get occasional glimpses of Emer which show her no longer as Mr. Yeats pictures her at Bricriu's Feast, "fierce as some beautiful bird," but as the prudent housewife, careful of her lord's people and of his great household at Dún Dealgan, and making it prosper under her capable management during his many

absences from her side. Much need had she to learn the women's virtues of gentleness and patience, as the passing years brought conviction of how high was the price to be paid for the glory of sharing the hero's life. And the dreams of the night were sorrowful for her, with visions of future woe.

But though many fair faces tempted Cuchulainn for a time from his allegiance to Emer—Fand, and Niamh, and Blanad, Eithne and Findchoem—it was of none of these he thought when "his span ended, his *geasa* done away with," the portents thickened round him "a mighty foreshadowing of evil." It was to Conchobar, and to Emer, his king and his wife, that his last message was sent. "But now go to Emain, to Conchobar and to Emer, and bring them life and health from me, for I will never go back to meet them again. It is my grief and my wound, I to part with them. And, O Laeg!" he said, "we are going under trouble and under darkness from Emer now, as it is often we come back to her with gladness out of strange places and far countries." And it was Emer's lament for him that uttered the grief of a world darkened by the quenching of a great light.

"Happy are they, happy are they who will never hear the cuckoo again for ever now the Hound has died from us.

"I am carried away like a branch on the stream; I will not bind up my hair to-day. From this day I have nothing to say that is better than Ochone."

. . . . .

"Then Emer bade Conall to make a wide, very deep grave for Cuchulainn, and she laid herself down beside her gentle comrade, and she put her mouth to his mouth, and she said: 'Love of my life, my friend, my sweetheart, my one choice of the men of the earth, many is the woman, wed or unwed, envied me until to-day; and I will not stay living after you.'

"And her life went out from her, and she herself and

Cuchulainn were laid in one grave by Conall. And he raised the one stone over them, and he wrote their names in Ogham, and he himself and all the men of Ulster keened them." [1]

We have seen golden-haired Emer play many *rôles* from the first glimpse we get of her seated amidst her maidens on the "bench of gathering" on her father's lawn—her charming face raised for a moment from the embroidery frame, while her ears are strained to catch the sound of the chariot that thunders into the peace of her life, loud-sounding under its royal freight of love and destiny. But one scene is conspicuously absent from the drama of her life—that which would show her to us with some beautiful child in her arms: a girl with her own blonde loveliness, or a boy, dark and comely like his hero-father. On the whole we see little of these women as mothers, and mother-love is but rarely used as a dramatic *motif* in our old tales. One wonders had the system of fosterage anything to do with this somewhat remarkable fact. Warlike Maeve looks on her sons as leaders for her army, and traffics in the beauty of her daughter, Findabhair, to bind men to her own cause. Gráinne, too, uses the destinies of her children to advance her personal projects. We hear of no child of Deirdre. Occasionally we find mother-love trying to avert fate, as in Dechtire's striving to keep her boy Cuchulainn by her side far from the warlike glories of Emain Macha. The tale of Macha herself is conceived in a spirit of homage to the sacred character of motherhood. "Help me," she cries to the bystanders out of her woman's anguished need, "for a mother hath borne each of you." And the strange Nemesis which overtook those who reverenced not the sanctity invoked in that appeal is represented as paralysing Ulster at the most fateful moment of her history for nine generations.[2]

[1] *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, p. 345. [2] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 99.

The story of Nessa [1] is one of the few old Irish tales in which mother-love is the predominant motive. Conchobar, the great king of Ulster, was her son, and from her he got his name, Mac Nessa, and to her he owed his kingship. "Her name had been in the beginning Assa, *i.e.*, 'the gentle,' and it was changed to Nessa (Niassa) 'the ungentle,' in this wise. She was the daughter of Eochaidh, king of Ulster, and had been trained up by twelve tutors, to whom she was ever docile and full of teachableness. But in one night the entire number of her tutors fell by the hand of Cathbad, the druid. Now the girl had no knowledge who they were who had slain her guardians, but from that moment she turned woman-warrior, and with her company set out to seek the author of the deed. In every district of Erin she destroyed and plundered, so that her name was changed to Nessa after that."

On one of her expeditions she fell into the power of Cathbad, and was forced by him to become his wife. Her father, the king, gave the married pair land in the territory of the Picts, and here in due course their son, Conchobar, was born. After the death of Cathbad, Fergus Mac Roich, who was the king of Ulster, desired to make Nessa his wife. She, mindful of the fact that her son was the grandson of the rightful kings of Ulster, bethought her how she might use the circumstance to gain the throne for him. She therefore made conditions with Fergus: namely, that for one year her son should reign over Ulster, so that his posterity might be called the descendants of a king. Fergus accepted her terms; and when Nessa had gained her point she set to work to instruct her son that he should win over to himself the most influential of the nobles and chiefs of the province. She supplied him with wealth, which he distributed

[1] *Cuchullin Saga*, p. 4.

secretly among the people, and in such wise did he win over the Ultonians that at the year's end, when Fergus demanded back the sovereignty, the chiefs refused to allow Conchobar to part with it, alleging that Fergus, having consented to barter the kingdom as a dowry to his wife, had, in fact, actually resigned it. And they held that to Fergus should be left only what he already possessed—namely his wife; and that Conchobar should retain the sovereignty of Ulster.

If, as compared with those of other countries, the literature of Ancient Ireland is not rich in tales wherein mother-love is the supreme motive, it counts in compensation among its treasures one of the finest tales of a sister's love in the world. Canon Sheehan speaks somewhere of a sister's love as "of all human loves the most abiding and unselfish." What a loss is ours, what an exquisite chapter is missing from the books he has left us, for the reason that as he searched the world of letters in search of examples of sisterly devotion to illustrate his dictum, the tragic deficiency of his education in things Irish kept him from thinking of one of the most moving of them all: the story of Fionnghuala in the *Fate of the Children of Lir.*[1]

Twin sister of Aodh, only a little older than Fiachra and Conn, what hidden forces of tenderness, of passionate devotion, of pity, ripened her into womanhood, with its fears, its cares, its spending of itself for others, while they still halted in childhood's immaturity. She alone has penetrated the designs of Aoifé, their stepmother, and knows that it is no love for a dead sister's children which urges the queen to take them with her in her chariot to visit Bodhbh Dearg: "and Fionnghuala was not willing to go with her on that journey; for she knew by her that

[1] *Oidhe Chloinne Lir.* Published for the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language by R. J. O'Duffy.

she had some intention of ruining or killing them, *for there was revealed to her* the design of treachery that was in the mind of Aoifé." It was she who first found powers of speech, after she and her brothers had been turned into white swans on the lake by Aoifé's druidical power. She forces her stepmother to set a term to their metamorphosis, and her words have power to move the passionate, jealous woman's heart to a tardy repentance. " Since I am not able to afford you any other relief henceforth, ye shall retain your own speech ; and ye shall sing plaintive music, at which men of the earth would sleep, and there shall be no music of the world its equal ; and ye shall retain your own reason and dignity." Henceforth the leadership and the spokesmanship of the forlorn little company is always Fionnghuala's. It is she who tells Lir the story of their undoing, and who plans the arrangement by which for the three hundred years appointed for them on Loch Dairbhreach " they thought it the same as being human beings ; for Lir and Bodhbh and all the Tuatha de Danaan took up an encampment on the shores of the lake ; and the swans used to be telling stories and conversing with the men of Erin each day, and discussing with their tutors and their fellow-pupils, and with all their friends in like manner ; and they used to chant very sweet, fairy music every night, and everyone who used to hear that music slept soundly and easily, no matter what disease or long illness might be upon him ; for happy and delighted after the music the birds chanted was everyone who heard it."

But at length it was time for the swans to bid adieu to their friends and to all their pleasant human intercourse, and begin the second term of their banishment—the three hundred years on the Sea of Moyle. So Fionnghuala sings the sad lay of farewell, and guides their flight to the cold angry sea in the North.

Cold and wretchedness, greatness of snow and frost,

violence of waves, roughness of sweeping tempests were their portion on the Current of Moyle. But at last one tempest more violent than any they had yet known threatened to separate them from each other. Then Fionnghuala counselled them to appoint some place of meeting to which they might return in case the storm scattered them, and they chose a rock known to all of them, " the Rock of the Seals."

Fionnghuala was the first to reach the rock, and as the dawn broke the next morning over the heaving sea she scanned the distance in all directions for some trace of her brothers. At last she saw Conn coming towards her " with heavy head, and drenched feathers, and the heart of the maiden greatly welcomed him ; and Fiachra came also cold, wet and quite faint ; and neither word nor speech of his was understood, such was the excess of cold and hardship which he had suffered ; and she put him under her wings and said : ' if Aodh would but come to us now, how happy we should be.'

" It was not long after that when she saw Aodh coming towards them, and Fionnghuala welcomed him greatly ; and she put him under the feathers of her breast and chest ; and Conn under her left wing, and she disposed of her feathers over them in that way." And so she comforted them as best she could, lavishing on them all she had, the treasures of her sisterly love.

It seemed to the brothers then that they had plumbed the uttermost depths of misery. But Fionnghuala knew better. Worse was yet to come during the three hundred years they had to spend in the Western Sea. One night even Fionnghuala failed to find any comfort for them : " They experienced a night such as they had never experienced any night before or after it, for the intensity of its frost and snow ; for a flag of ice grew upon the whole of the current between Erris and Achill, and their feet adhered to the ice-flag, so that they were not able

to stir, and the brothers fell to moaning greatly, and to lamenting greatly, and to grieving intensely ; and Fionnghuala was checking them, and she could not." All she could do, poor martyr of love, was to sing to them.

Then God had pity on them—and He waited not for His servant's matin-bell to summon them to knowledge of Himself. By some mysterious way He made Himself known to Fionnghuala, and through the sister knowledge of the True God was received by the brothers. " And neither tempest nor bad weather affected them from that time out."

It was Fionnghuala, too, who first recognised the " cleric's bell " and knew that it was destined to liberate them from their age-long woes. " Let us chant our music now," said Fionnghuala, " to the High-King of Heaven and Earth." And they immediately chanted a plaintive, slow-sweet fairy music, praising the Lord and adoring the High-King. Mochaemog, divinely illumined as to the makers of that slow-sweet music, went to the brink of the lake, and called the birds to him, and made a home for them near by his newly-erected church. " He ordered chains of bright white silver to be made for them, and he put a chain between Aodh and Fionnghuala, and a chain between Conn and Fiachra," and they were very happy to be in his company.

At length the term set by Aoifé for their banishment from human form arrived, for " the woman from the South, and the man from the North " were united, and King Lairgnen and Queen Deoch were the rulers of Connacht. A great desire to possess the wonderful birds arose in the heart of Deoch, and when Mochaemog refused to part with them, the king, her husband, went to seize them. " But as soon as he laid hands on the birds their feathery coats fell off them, and of the sons were made three withered, bony old men, and of the daughter a lean, withered old woman."

It was then Fionnghuala said: "Come to baptize us, O Cleric, for our death is near; and it is certain that you do not think worse of parting with us than we do of parting with you; therefore make our grave, and place Conn on my right side, and Fiachra on my left, and Aodh before my face."

Thus was it done; and in an island on the Wild Western Ocean these four await the Resurrection. And as in the night of tempest on the Sea of Moyle, or of cold so fierce that it froze the current between Erris and Achill, their place is always thus: Conn sheltered at Fionnghuala's left hand, Fiachra at her right, and on her breast the head of Aodh—the twin brother loved best of all.

The Holy Women of the Gael

IT has been said—and if there was any irreverence in the saying, it was more apparent than real—that no product of a country (not even its wine) is more characteristic of it, more racy of its soil, more impregnated with its atmosphere, than its Saints. The saying is even truer, perhaps, of a country's women-saints than of its men. The passion and the fire of Spain burn through the saintliness of Teresa. The light and perfume in which is steeped the story of Elizabeth of Thuringia are as those of a forest-dawn in the Germany of the *Minnesinger*. The character of St. Clare's holiness—that marvellous compound of virile strength and a tenderness essentially womanly—has its counterpart in her own Umbrian hill-country, where the heights, "uplifted and chaste," are sweet with the breath of vineyards and olive-gardens. And *our* Saints—Brigid and Ita, and Fanchea and Gobnait, and all the rest of their white-robed, maiden company—is it not the fragrance of an Irish springtime they shed around them, when "swift to our calling" they come to us to lead us close to the heart of the mystery of the Gael? The smell of the rising sap, and of fresh-turned Irish earth, bird-song and the bleating of new-born lambs, the joy of the Easter-tide—of these things are the legends of our Irish Women Saints full. But they take their savour no less—that characteristic Gaelic savour

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Authorities: Cuimmin's "Poem on the Saints of Ireland" (ed. by Whitley Stokes in *Zeitschrift* f. *celt. Phil.* i. 59–73, 1897); "Lives of Saints from Book of Lismore" (edited by Whitley Stokes); Canon O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Irish Saints"; Fr. O'Donoghue's "Brendaniana"; Archbishop Healy's "Insula Sanctorum"; Dr. Hyde's "Religious Songs of Connacht."

which is as unmistakable as the smell of the turf—from the presence of homely, intimate, primary things: the flame of a fire on the hearth; the gleam of well-water; bread in the kneading trough; the white foam of milk in the milking pail. However far we may have travelled—self-exiled, most of us—from the world of Gaelic thought and feeling which ought to be our true *patria*, we can hardly escape a pang of home-sickness when that familiar odour is wafted to us. And it is a salutary thing—the *nostalgia* of the Gael for his lost heritage. Let us tarry, then, for a little time among these legends, breathing deep draughts of the atmosphere they generate. Let us try to see our Women Saints as the Gael saw them, when with face still "unestrangéd" from his ancient ideals, he "viewed the world invisible," and saw a shining Jacob's ladder, busy with ceaseless traffic of angels, stretched permanently from Heaven to the barest places of this poor earth.

It was as Cuimmin of Connor painted her, more than twelve and a half centuries ago, that the Gael has always loved best to picture Saint Brigid. "Blessed Brigid loved lasting devotion . . . shepherding, and early rising; hospitality to wonder-working men." What a master-hand drew that portrait! And on what magic palette did old Cuimmin mix his colours, that they glow even to-day with a light and warmth which are as those of life itself? In an eternal dawnlight he has set her, in the midst of the plain, with the new sun shining on the whiteness of her veil and mantle, and on the dewy grasslands on which her feet are set. Over the green of the Curragh are scattered the white flocks she loved "to shepherd," and she moves amongst them, with praises of God on her lips, and in her heart the love of all His creatures for His dear sake.

That picture—the Gael's treasured possession for so many centuries—has influenced more than one can easily

estimate his conception of ideal womanhood, and as an immediate consequence, the whole direction of his civilisation. It was kept before the Lady of the Castle by the chroniclers and poets, who bade her see in the virtues of Brigid, especially her "lasting devotion," her "hospitality," her care of her household—typified by her "shepherding" and "early rising"—the chief jewels of the sex. Again and again in the *Four Masters'* praises of the "Valiant Women" of the princely houses of Eire we seem to catch the echo of Cuimmin's very words. The obituary of the woman whose glory it was to have given to Ireland perhaps the greatest of her sons, Judith Maguire, mother of Hugh O'Neill, may well serve as an illustration: "a woman who was the pillar of support and maintenance of the indigent, and the mighty, of the poets and exiled, of widows and orphans, of the clergy and men of science, of the poor and the needy; a woman who was the heart of counsel and advice to the gentlemen and chiefs of Conor MacNessa; a demure, womanly, devout, charitable, meek, benignant woman with pure piety and the love of God and her neighbours."[1] There is a temptation to rifle the pages of the Annals for other instances, in which they are rich, but I will let the tribute to Judith Maguire stand alone—if for no other reason than to emphasise the fact that if Hugh O'Neill was the man he was, it was not "out of the wind" (to use the graphic Irish phrase) he got his greatness.

When Michael O'Clery and his comrades copied that obituary of Judith Maguire they may well have thought that they were penning the lament for an ideal which had perished amid the ruins of its material setting. For the castles which had sheltered those gracious and noble ladies were roofless and abandoned, or had passed with "the lordship of the territories" into the hands of the

[1] *Four Masters* (O'Donovan's edition, p. 2223, A.D. 1600).

stranger. The old Gaelic aristocracy, with all that they had garnered of native culture during the centuries of their existence, had fled over the sea, or sought under some poor roof near their ancestral castle, the sole refuge the homeland could give. But the refugees had saved one thing from the wreck of their old existence. Wherever they went, there the image of Brigid as Cuimmin had seen her, went with them. Nay, not the pictured image of Brigid, but Brigid herself a living woman busy with her old tasks: "lasting devotion, shepherding, and early rising, hospitality to wonder-working men." The Gaels in their changed fortune saw the "Veiled Virgin" taking her share in every homely action of their poor life—close to the *bean a' tighe* as she raked the fire, or went for water to the well, or kneaded the bread, or put the children to bed.[1] The Irish mother lulling her little ones to sleep borrowed Brigid's own girdle to put around them and guard their innocence:

> "Crios Bhrighde faoi mo lár
> Agus brat Mhuire faoi mo cheann
> Tar a Mhícil óig agus glac mo lámh."

Lullabied thus, how sweetly they slept, the *patairi beaga* —Brigid's "girdle" around them, Mary's "mantle" making a pillow for the dear curly heads, and Michael, "the Warrior Archangel," laying aside his martial business to hold the little brown hands! Light of the sacred hearth fire, did ever your leaping flames illumine such a picture as that, on any land on earth but ours? And is it because of that picture that your flame has always burned so clearly in Ireland, and the sweetness and purity of Irish home life amidst the poorest surroundings have been the wonder of all the rest of the world?

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[1] See various prayers to St. Brigid in Dr. Hyde's "Religious Songs of Connacht."

As the little boys and girls, whose sleep had been thus sweetly protected, grew in their turn into young men and maidens ready to found homes of their own, they loved to find Muire and Brigid awaiting them in their new abode :

"Muire i mullach an tighe
Agus Brighid in a lár."

The young bride was accounted happy whose bridegroom led her across the threshold of her new home on the Festival Day of Brigid, and it was the charming custom for her girl friends to fix a "St. Brigid's cross" in the thatch which sheltered it. The young husband, if he was a fisherman, borrowed the cowl of Brigid against the dangers of the sea. If he was a shepherd or a husbandman he put his flocks or his crops under her safeguard.

Her earthly life thus mystically extended by the power of her followers' devotion for centuries after Ninnidh Pure-Hand had, after "communion and sacrifice," sped her soul to Heaven, it becomes a matter of some difficulty to distinguish between the two phases of Brigid's existence. To the student of history the life of the historical personage, Brigid, the foundress and first Abbess of Kildare, presents such problems that to write it would be a well-nigh impossible task. Do we lose a great deal after all if the student renounces the task? Does it matter very much if we can never know with certainty when and where she was born and set in proper chronological order the events of her career? It seems to me we do not. Was she nobly born of Christian parents bound in honourable wedlock, as Cogitosus, jealous for her honour, asserts? Or was she the daughter of a slave mother and a pagan father, as so many others who have written about her maintain? Even the answer to that question, considered as a piece of pure history, does not

matter a great deal. But it matters a great deal that the story of her slave origin has found almost universal credence among a people so fastidious of pure birth, so devoted to the cult of the Genealogies, as the Gaels. It would be impossible for them to proclaim in a more dramatic fashion their belief in the might of Christianity to restore womanhood to its lost dignity.

It was as no new star aflame in the heavens, like the dream stars which heralded the birth of so many others of the saints of Erin, but as a bright fire enkindled on earth, that the coming of Brigid was symbolised. A "watcher of the skies" keeping his star vigil, turned his eyes earthwards at a sudden radiance, and saw a pillar of fire rising from the place where the bond-maid Broicsech, lay with her new-born babe.[1] As a fire and a light upon earth thus Brigid came. Of fire and light, too, was the radiant name compounded which the angels chose who had the naming of her. And with the idea of fire and light was her memory always associated even after Henri de Loundres had quenched the immemorial flames of Kildare.

The world into which she came had, in truth, need of that flame. Scholars may have renounced the impossible task of fixing the date of her birth, but we know that she was born at a time when the dark night of heathenism lay heavy on the country. The power of the *Magi*, with whom Adamnan shows Columcille in long conflict, was yet unbroken, and slavery, with all its dreadful consequences, flourished vigorously. As we read her miracles, the image of a sorely afflicted land forms itself before us. Pitiable figures of lepers and cripples, of madmen and demoniacs, stalk abroad. Again and again, in the tales of the bare larder miraculously replenished, of her "hospitality to wonder-working men," and of the troops of

[1] *Betha Bhrighdi* (Book of Lismore), p. 36.

poor around her dairy door, we seem to see the country in the iron grasp of famine. Bands of freebooters roam at large, and the tales of their cattle-raids, no less than those of the tyrannous attitude of kings and rulers, indicate an era wherein might was the only right. By the marvellous dispensation of Providence, one who had suffered in her person most of the ills of that era was destined to alleviate them, and by another dispensation not less marvellous, the miracle of regeneration, which was the miracle of her life-work, was wrought by the power of qualities primarily and essentially feminine, and by a woman who had never quitted her woman's *rôle*. "She tended the sheep, she satisfied the birds, she fed the poor." [1] No all-consuming blinding conflagration was the fire of Brigid, but rather a warm hearth-flame—and the "brightness and sheen of her chastity" might well be symbolised by the light of it, and the glow of her chosen beatitude, mercy, by the warmth of it. By the power of her pure maidenhood, and the might of her mercy and charity the "miracles and marvels" of Brigid were wrought—and the greatest miracle of all was the change wrought in the position of women, with all its incalculable social consequences. Broicsech was the slave woman—the woman degraded by Paganism. Broicsech's daughter was the first Abbess of Kildare, the head of a system founded on the twin principles of the essential dignity of pure womanhood, and the reverence men owe to it. It cannot be too strongly insisted on—and our Gaelic ancestors for their part were never tired of insisting on it—that this tremendous social revolution was effected by a woman whose chief equipment for her task consisted in her chastity and her charity, and whose life was spent in a round of the homeliest and lowliest duties. That is the keynote to the rightful interpretation of the stories

[1] *Betha Bhrighdi*, p. 37.

the Gael has gathered up about Brigid. He loved to take the whitest and the purest things to symbolise her chastity—the whiteness of milk, the sheen of fire. Only the purest of food might nourish her pure body.[1] Even the most sordid things were purified as by fire when she was near.[2] The touch of her hand on the altar, whereat she made her vow of virginity, turned the dry wood into green. Thus did the Gael bring home to himself the marvels of Brigid's chastity. As for her charity he saw her exercise it unceasingly from the days when she helped her sick mother in the mountain dairy, and set aside the "thirteenth portion" of each churning (and that portion greater than any of the others) for Christ, whom she saw "in the person of every faithful guest." It was because of her charity that God wrought miracles for her. "For everything that Brigid would ask of the Lord was granted to her at once. For this was her desire: to satisfy the poor, to expel every hardship, to spare every miserable man." [3]

A no less feminine *rôle* has been assigned to St. Ita [4] in Gaelic tradition. Her charming task was that of fostering little boy saints. Here again old Cuimmin of Conor has crystallised the Gael's conception of her:—

"My Ida loved a great fostering."

Now it was her own nephew, St. Mochoemoc (Lat. Pulcherius) whom she reared and educated until he was of an age to start off with the "Bell of his resurrection" in his hand to take up his studies for the priesthood in St. Comghall's great monastery of Bangor. Now it was little Brendan of Clonfert, whom Bishop Erc brought to her cell, a tiny year-old baby to be fostered in saintship.

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[1] *Betha Bhrighdi*, p. 37. [2] *Ib.* p. 36.
[3] *Ib.* p. 50.
[4] See her Life in Canon O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Irish Saints," under January 15.

And sometimes, as the exquisite old story has it, it was Iosagán Himself :—

" Jesukin
Lives my little cell within ;
What were wealth of cleric high—
All is lie but Jesukin.

. . . .

" Jesu, more than angels' aid,
Fosterling not formed to fade,
Nursed by me in desert wild,
Jesu, child of Judah's maid." [1]

The tales remembered about St. Ita—the most poetic figure, perhaps, among our Irish women saints—have much in common with those Brother Thomas of Celano tells about St. Clare. For both of them, because they loved Him with a surpassing love, Jesukin wrought a wonderful miracle on the blessed night of Christmas. Let us set down, side by side, the story told by Celano of St. Clare's Christmas, and that recorded of St. Ita in the Latin *Life of St. Brendan* :—

" At the hour of the Nativity, when the earth sings with the angels of the new-born Babe, the other ladies went to the Oratory for Matins and left the Mother alone, weighed down with illness. Clare then began to think on the little Jesus and to grieve sorely that she might not be present at His praises, and said with a sigh, ' Lord, God, behold I am left alone with Thee in this place.' And lo ! suddenly the wonderful music that was being sung in the Church of S. Francesco began to resound in her ears ; she heard the voices of the Friars chanting the Psalter, she listened to the harmonies of the singers ; she even perceived the sound of the organ. But what surpasses even this marvel is the fact that Clare was worthy to see the manger of the Lord." [2]

[1] Sigerson's " Bards of the Gael and Gall," p. 153.
[2] " Life of St. Clare," ed. by Fr. Paschal Robinson, p. 47.

"St. Ita, the foster-mother of St. Brendan, on a Christmas night said in her heart: would that I could on this blessed night, receive the Holy Communion from the hands of my foster-son, most holy Brendan. When the holy virgin, full of faith, rose during the night to celebrate the vigil of the festival in her own Convent, she was taken up by an angel and borne away to the city of Clonfert-Brendan. There St. Brendan, foreseeing in spirit her visit to him, went forth to meet her in the porch of his church, bearing the Blessed Sacrament; and the Saint of God, having alighted on the earth, received the Holy Communion from the hand of St. Brendan with fervent thanksgiving to Christ." [1]

That story which reveals, among other things, St. Ita's continued affection for her fosterling, reminds us how much the Gael loved to find in his saints the natural human affections still preserved amid the ardours of their Passion for God. We have thus among the legends of our women Saints the most beautiful instances of sisterly devotion. If the story of St. Fanchea's love for her brother, Enda, is the best known, that of St. Brigid (a namesake of the Abbess of Kildare) for her brother Andrew is the most poetical. It was Fanchea who turned the thoughts of the young chieftain, her brother, from his fighting and his love-making, by showing him, over the bier of the dead girl whom he loved, the vanity of all things earthly. It was Fanchea who, when Enda had gone to Rome, followed him there, and brought him back to spend himself—and his gifts of saintship—among his own people. Patriotic Fanchea! It was Fanchea, the Gael believed, who gave St. Enda to Aran.

"A Sister's Story," [2] as charming as any in literature or tradition, is that of St. Brigid of Opaca, near Fiesole—

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[1] "Brendaniana," p. 232.

[2] O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Irish Saints," under February 1.

and though we owe the record of it to a Florentine gentleman, Filippo Villani, it has by no means lost its Gaelic savour. The little maiden, Brigid, the daughter of noble Irish parents, had an elder brother, Andrew, whom she loved very dearly. For his part Andrew was marvellously devoted to Brigid; and there are pleasant pictures in Villani's narrative of the little brother and sister going hand in hand together to school, while Andrew told Brigid of the thoughts with which his mind was full. For even at that early age Andrew was predestined for saintship.

When he was still very young Andrew came under the special influence of Donat (afterwards destined to be well known as St. Donatus, Bishop of Fiesole). Donat, in the course of time, yielded to the characteristic longing of the Irish Saints for the "White Martyrdom" of the *peregrinatio*. He told Andrew of his intention to leave Ireland, and Andrew, with that same longing for the *peregrinatio* strong upon him, begged to be allowed to accompany his master and friend.

Brigid was heart-broken when Andrew came with the news to her. "Brother, dear, why dost thou leave me? When shall we see each other again?" So she pleaded, tearfully. Then at last she found strength to make the sacrifice. "Go in peace, and pray for me left here in sorrow."

The long years passed—and no word came to Brigid of the brother who had gone into exile for Christ's sake. She knew nothing of the wonderful destiny which had overtaken Donat and Andrew in the far-off Etrurian city, and made of Donat its Bishop, and of Andrew the head of a great religious community. As for herself, she had consecrated her life to God and lived the life of one of those holy recluses who were so common in early Christian Ireland. One day as she sat in her little wattled hut at her frugal meal, she felt herself miraculously

transported to a place where around the couch of a dying man a number of monks were gathered. "What need of more words?" as the old writers would say. It was Andrew who lay there dying, and whose soul, poised for its flight to Paradise, had longed so passionately for the presence of Brigid that the power of that longing had drawn Brigid over land and sea to the far-off place of her brother's agony. The end of the story is like that of some old Irish romance. Brigid determined to spend the remainder of her life near the place consecrated by her brother's heroic sanctity. In a wood near Fiesole she resumed her recluse's life; and here she died, a very old woman. "The flagstone upon which she was wont to pray, she was upon it till she died. Her soul went to Heaven. And that flagstone was put over her face." May we not borrow that ending from the old tragic story of Liadan for this pure idyll of sisterly love?

The same trait of sisterly love is very strongly marked in St. Gobnait of Ballyvourney.[1] Her sister lay sick of a fever, and while St. Gobnait nursed her the news was borne to her that their dear master and friend, St. Abban, was dead. Gobnait knew that if her sister learned the sorrowful tidings she, too, would surely die. So she kept her grief to herself, and to her sister's enquiries for St. Abban gave comforting answers. Then suddenly she heard the distant *caoine* growing louder and more distinct as the dead saint's funeral train drew nearer to the sisters' house. Gobnait threw herself on her knees and begged of God that her sister might not hear that "piercing wail"—and her prayer was heard, for though the mourners passed very close to her, the sick girl heard nothing. That seems to me one of the most human and tender stories in all our Saint-Literature. It makes one long to know a great deal more than one does about St. Gobnait.

[1] O'Hanlon, *op. cit.* under date February 11.

With St. Attracta we find ourselves among the holy women whom St. Patrick gathered around him—

> "Beneath a pine three vestals sat close veiled,
> A song these childless sang of Bethlehem's Child,
> Low-toned, and worked their altar-cloth, a Lamb
> All white on golden blazon, near it bled
> The bird that with her own blood feeds her young;
> Red drops her holy breast suffused. These three
> Were daughters of three kings." [1]

Aubrey de Vere has marvellously caught the atmosphere of romance and poetry, as pure and radiant as that of a summer dawn, in which the Gael has set these white-robed vestals. The snowy veil that covers their head has been spun by angel hands in Heaven. Under the blossoming apple-trees they walk—blossom pure themselves like Cruimtheris, whose exquisite story is enshrined in the *Tripartite*. I have not the *Tripartite* at hand, so I borrow Dr. Healy's words to tell the story. "Once when Patrick was at Armagh, nine daughters of the King of the Lombards came over the sea, and a daughter of the King of Britain came also on a pilgrimage to Patrick, and they tarried at a place near Armagh. . . Some of the virgins died and were buried there, but the others went to Drum Fendida and there abode. The virgin, Cruimtheris, however, went and set up at Cingoba, and Benen went to carry food to her until Patrick planted an apple tree for the holy virgin; and then she lived on the fruit of that tree and on the milk of a doe that grazed in her little orchard." [2]

Equally exquisite, fragrant with the same dewy breath of poetry and romance, radiant with the same dawn-light, comes to us the story of little Princesses, Eithne

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[1] "Legends of St. Patrick," by Aubrey de Vere.
[2] *Insula Sanctorum*, p. 126.

the Fair, and Feilimy the Ruddy—twin roses white and red of the royal stock of Erin's high kings.[1]

On a lovely summer morning the little princesses who had been sent to Cruachan from the court of their father, King Laogaire at Tara, to be trained in "the six gifts of womanhood" under the watchful eyes of the wisest druids in Ireland, rose from their couches of silk and went down to bathe in the fountain at the edge of the forest. While yet afar the sound of men's voices making strange music fell on their ears, and when they drew nearer a strange spectacle met their sight—a circle of grave-faced men singing around the forest well, and the morning sun shining on their tonsured heads and snowy garments. The first thought of the maidens was that these were people of the *Sidhe* from the fairy-hill of Cruachan; but it was Patrick and his band of clerics singing their matin hymns, praising the Lord in psalmody at the rising of the sun. To the Princess Eithne's questioning Patrick made answer, telling the maidens not to put their faith in the *Sidhe* but in the One True God Whose messenger he was. "Who is your God?" asked the Princess. "Where does He dwell? Is He in the skies or under them? In the mountains, or in the valleys, in the sea, or in rivers? Hath He sons beautiful in form and appearance? Doth He possess gold and silver, or doth His kingdom abound in all manner of wealth? By what sort of worship is He to be adored? Is He young or is He old? Are His years to fail after a definite period, or are they to be lasting?"

And these were the words of Patrick in reply:—

"Our God is the God of all; the God of Heaven and earth; the God of seas and rivers; the God of sun, moon and stars; the God of mountain heights and valley depths; God above the heavens, in heaven and under heaven.

[1] O'Hanlon, *op. cit.* under date January 11.

Many mansions He has, heaven, earth, sea, and all these contain. From Him the sun and moon, these luminaries of the world have their light. On earth He produced ranges of mountains, rivers and fountains with beautiful islands in the sea. From nothing He created all things visible and invisible. He sustains all, inspires all, vivifies all; He has a Son congenital with the Father, and neither is the Father prior to the Son, nor the Son later in time than the Father. Nor is the Holy Spirit separated from the Father and the Son, but he proceeds from the Father and the Son, co-eternal with and equal to both Persons. Yet the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are not three Gods, but one God, true, holy, and omnipotent. Those three Persons are one and united. Wherefore as ye are the daughters of a temporal king, it is meet and just that your thoughts and eyes should be drawn away from perishable things to those that are eternal, from things lowly to those that are above, and that your nuptials, chaste and indissoluble, should be sought with the Son of the King of Heaven, Whose duration hath no bounds, and Whose happiness hath no limit, rather than with the sons of kings and their perishable fortunes." The words awoke in the hearts of the maidens a great longing to behold the face of the King's Son. And Patrick told them that they must first believe and be baptised. "We believe," they said; and in the fountain they were baptised. Then the maidens besought the Saint to show them face to face the Royal One to Whom alone they would plight their troth. He answered them: "You must first with the mouth of your heart and of your body, devoutly receive the flesh and blood of your Spouse. Thus being quickened with the living food you may pass from this impure world into the starry bride-chamber."

Thus was it done and with the pure Body of Christ in their breast, and the white veil of consecrated virgins

on their head and the waters of baptism still shining on their brow—the maidens went forth to their bridals.

> "For they lay on one bed, like brides new wed,
> By Clebach well; and the dirge days over,
> On their smiling faces a veil was spread,
> And a green mound raised that bed to cover,
> Such were the ways of those ancient days—
> To Patrick for aye that grave was given;
> And above it a church he built in their praise;
> For in them had Eire been spoused to heaven." [1]

Does it not seem to us who have spent a little time with the "Holy Women of the Gael" that we, too, have walked for a space under blossoming apple trees—and eaten, like Cruimtheris, of the food of the blossom pure?

[1] Aubrey de Vere, "Legends of St. Patrick."

The Mothers of the Saints of Erin

WAS ever a more exquisite phrase found, even by a Frenchwoman, than that of the mother who, hearing in her son's verses the very thoughts of her soul, its wordless poems, born now into lovely harmonies, thanked God for her own soul being dumb since He had given to her son that which expressed it? "My son is my voice." [1]

Long before the phrase was found, the truth it enshrines was known. Saints and poets, searchers both after the Ideal, how much of that to which they give perfect form, either in their lives, or in their words, has already been conceived in the souls of their mothers. So the mother of a saint, as the mother of a poet, is doubly the mother of her son :—

> "She bore you with a double pang
> Of the body and the spirit."

The saint in him is born of the saint in her.

A thousand years earlier than Charles d' Héricault (who when he realised this truth expressed it in one of the most delightful of books, *Les Mères des Saints*) our own Aenghus the Culdee had discovered it for himself. He found he could not "make praises of the Saints of Erin" without making praises of their mothers, so he

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Authorities : O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Irish Saints"; Adamnan's *Vita Sancti Columbæ*; "Lives of the Saints from Book of Lismore"; Jonas's *Vita Columbani*.

[1] Madame de Lamartine in her beautiful "Journal," edited by her son Alphonse under the title *Manuscript de ma Mère*.

wrote a book about the mothers, and called it by the name which I have borrowed as a title for this article: *De Matribus Sanctorum Hiberniae.*

The other Irish hagiographers, wise with the same wisdom, have remembered the mothers, for the most part, when they set themselves to tell the stories of the sons. In this way we get the most charming, if all too fleeting, glimpses, not only of the boyhood of our great saints, but of the women who helped to make them what they became.

Into the quiet home of middle-aged parents, noble but poor (like the Mother and Foster Father of the Master Himself) little Comghall [1] came, "a dear pledge," a gift from God, long prayed for, rapturously welcomed. Even before he was born his mother, Briga, knew by the prophecy of a holy man, Bishop Macniseus of Conor, that her son was to be a saint of God. All night long, as the old stories tell us, a wonderful light lay on the land from Lough Neagh to the sea; and just as the sun was rising over the Hills of Mourne and the sea that trembled below them, the "child of prophecy" was laid in Briga's happy arms.

The day of his baptism came, and Briga gave her little one into the chosen sponsors' care, and sent him to be christened by the blind old priest, Fedlimin. "Who are these shining, white-robed ones?" said the sponsors, one to the other, as they saw a band of youths in snowy garments, with radiant brows, and hair of shining gold, join their company. When they heard the singing of the white-vestured boys they knew them for angels. So angels and mortals, singing together, stood around the miraculous fountain in which Comghall was baptised. In that happy hour Earth was in tune with Heaven.

There were hard days in the poor home of Briga, and

[1] O'Hanlon, *op. cit.* under date May 10.

her husband, Sedna, while their son was growing up. Like many an Irish father and mother in the centuries since, they had a severe struggle to make their boy a priest. They worked unceasingly and denied themselves in a thousand ways that he might be educated. But to live at all his help was necessary for them, and his studies had to be made in the intervals of labour on his father's rocky farm. There is a story of Briga stealing into the field to look after her boy, and finding him asleep near a heap of stones in a glory of light. The pious old writer who tells the story was chiefly interested in the miracle which thus attested Comghall's early sanctity. But perhaps we women value even more the glimpse it gives us of the mother-heart of Briga. She could not but grieve for her boy, worn out with the double labour of mind and body; and she left her household tasks a little to seek him out, all unknown to him, and learn how he was faring.

When the boy grew up another trouble came upon Briga. The Prince of their nation, the Dal nAraidhe, went to war, and Comghall, like all the other young men of the territory, was called up for military service. Once more the mother saw deferred the realisation of the dream of her life, her son's ordination to the priesthood; and while she trembled for the safety of his body in the battle-field, she trembled still more for the safety of his innocent soul in the camp. But God was merciful, and He opened up the eyes of the Prince to young Comghall's vocation, and in a short time the boy was excused further service and sent home to Briga, and her old husband, Sedna.

For some years Comghall pursued his studies for the priesthood at home under the direction of a cleric, who lived quite near them. But the cleric's life was by no means edifying; and perhaps Briga, though she might suffer at the decision, and break her heart at the parting, saw reason to join her entreaties with Comghall's and persuade Sedna, her husband, to let their boy go far

away from them to Fintan of Clonenagh, "to learn the Rules of the Saints of Erin."

Much sorrow Briga had, then, with all her joy; but compared with many another among the "Mothers of the Saints of Erin" she was to be counted a fortunate woman. Poor and bare as the home in Dalaradia was, and hard as she and her husband had to struggle, they had at least the comfort of being able to keep their boy by their side for a time comparatively long.

No such comfort had Eithne, the Princess of Tirconaill, the mother of Columcille.

When we speak of Eithne there comes before us, all unbidden, one of the loveliest pictures in the world, that of a beautiful young mother with her first-born in her arms. We have been watching Briga bending over her tired boy asleep in the field. There is beauty, indeed, in the worn face, so tender and sweet the mother love that animates it. But it is a quiet unarresting beauty, all unlike the radiant loveliness of this other mother, whose image comes before us now: the high-born young Princess Eithne in her "sunny bower" with her White Dove nestling on her bosom.

We know that Eithne was a poet, not only because "her son was her voice" (and that voice has sung some of the sweetest strains that have ever thrilled Irish ears) but by reason of the dream [1] she had while yet her little one lay beneath her heart: "On a certain night, the Angel of the Lord appeared to the mother of the venerable man, and standing by her, brought her what seemed to be a mantle of marvellous beauty, in which were embroidered in glowing colours the loveliest flowers of all the earth. After a little while he asked it back from her, and taking it from her hands, raised and spread it out, sending it forth on the empty air. She, grieving for its loss, asked

[1] *Vita Sancti Columbæ*, iii, 1.

him: 'Why dost thou take from me this most lovely mantle?' To which the reply came: 'For the reason that this mantle belongs to one of such grandeur and honourable station that thou canst not longer keep it by thee.' And then the lady saw that mantle gradually pass from her, and as it floated away, it spread over the width of the plains and the tops of the mountains, and the forests."

She must often have thought of her dream when she sat amid her little court of maidens in garden, or "Grianan," with her lovely boy in her arms. All his life Columcille was noted for his beauty of form and countenance. Think of him, for a moment, as a curly-headed baby in his lovely young mother's arms.

Too soon alas! the sequel of the dream came true. He was a very tiny boy, when, like the mantle broidered with rarest flowers, he was taken from his mother, and sent to be fostered by the old priest, Cruithnechan.[1] It was the common fate of high-born children to be taken from their mothers and given to others to be nurtured, but the fact that it was common did not make it, perhaps, much easier for the mothers to bear. And perhaps Eithne could not feel quite satisfied in her tender mother heart that an old man, no matter how holy, would know how to take care of her boy.

Happily there was no need for anxiety on this score. By all accounts Cruithnechan took excellent care of the youngster; and the happy childhood of Columcille in the old priest's home is the clearest impression we carry away from the numerous legends that still exist of those years. People used to show at Templedouglas [2] the very place where the little boy-saint learned to walk; and no modern teacher was ever more fertile in devices for making

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[1] *Vita Sancti Columbæ*, iii, 2.

[2] See O'Hanlon, *op. cit.* under date June 9.

lessons attractive to children than was old Cruithnechan, fourteen hundred years ago. He got the letters of the alphabet cut on a cake,[1] that his small pupil might be the more attracted to the learning of them. He took care, too, that the boy should have plenty of companions, and it must have been delightful to him to sit reading his book by the open door of his little wattled hut, and hear, borne on the clear evening air, the voices of the little children joyfully welcoming their playmate. "Here comes our Colum from the Church to-day."[2] As long as he lived Columcille had a marvellous power of winning hearts,[3] and his first conquests were made among the small boys of Templedouglas. "They used to lift up their hands for joy" at the sight of him, Keating tells us.

Sometimes old Cruithnechan and his pupil went visiting. One such visit is recorded to Bishop Brogach in Tir Enda, with whom the pair spent Christmas.[4]

So Eithne, seeing her boy grow up sturdy and beautiful, and well instructed, was content to leave him where he was. In course of time, too, other children were born to her, a boy called Eoghan, and three little girls called Cuimne, Mincholeth and Sinech, who all became mothers of saints.[5]

Cara, the mother of Brendan the Voyager, shared with Eithne the sorrow of an early parting from her little saint son. But it was to a gentle nun, St. Ita, Cara's boy was sent, and Ita, as we have learned in our previous study of the women saints of Ireland, was noted for her great love of fostering. "My Ita loved a great fostering," old Cuimmin sang of her. That fact must have made Cara's sacrifice less hard. She, too, knew by a dream

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[1] *Betha Coluim Chille* (in *Book of Lismore*), p. 24.
[2] Keating's *Forus Feasa*.
[3] Adamnan describes him as "*omnibus carus*."
[4] *Betha Coluim Chille*, p. 24.
[5] Reeves in his edition of "Adamnan," p. 246.

that her son was called of God, even before his birth, for the vision she had of white snow and shining gold was thus rightfully interpreted as signifying the child whose purity was to be that of the snow, and holiness as shining and precious as gold.

On the morning of the child's birth, there came to the *dún* of Cara and her husband, Finlugh, the holy Bishop Erc. He told the happy father and mother that as he walked by the shore of the bay in the starlight and gazed over the waters, he had seen a great radiance over the land, and "the ministering of white angels" around the *dún*. And so, he hastened forth in his chariot to baptise the "child of power." [1]

For a year and a day Cara had the joy of keeping her baby. Then, as once before, there came to her ears at dawn the noise of Bishop Erc's loud-sounding chariot; and when it drove away, it bore her little boy on his first journey to St. Ita's cell.

We may be sure that Cara often visited Ita during the five years little Brendan spent under the saint's care. What a happy mother she must have been when Ita told her that not she alone but Angels from heaven were nursing the boy. Whenever he caught sight of her the nun told his mother, he shouted for joy. One day she asked him what caused his delight. "Thou," said he, "whom I see speaking to me continually, and many virgins (without number) like thee, and they together fostering me from one hand to another." "Angels," says the old Irish *Life*, "were there in the guise of virgins":—

> "Angels in the form of white virgins
> Were fostering Brendan,
> From one hand to the other,
> Without much harm to the babe." [2]

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[1] *Betha Brenainn* (in *Book of Lismore*), p. 100.
[2] *Ib.* p. 101.

It was as hard on Ita as on Cara when little six-year-old Brendan, "the fosterling of angels," was taken from the former's care by Bishop Erc, who wanted the boy to be henceforth under his own direction. Such was the apostolic poverty of Erc that there was not even a cow about his place, and his poor little pupil would have had to go to bed supperless many a time, had not a doe come down every day from the mountains, and allowed herself to be milked for Brendan.[1] Perhaps Cara got alarmed when she heard of these privations, for we presently find her sending her daughter Briga to Bishop Erc's place, most probably that the girl might be near her brother and look after him.[2]

It is these little human touches, in which they so abound, that make the Lives of our Irish Saints so delightful. We feel as we read them that these little boys and their mothers are indeed our own kith and kin; and when we discover the youngsters getting into mischief, now and then, like other little boys we know, we feel it still more. Brendan was very rude on one occasion to a little princess, and had to be punished for it.[3] The occasion was this: Bishop Erc, going one day to fulfil a preaching engagement, took his pupil with him in his chariot. When they got to their destination, he left the boy outside the church, to hold the reins. There sat Brendan, feeling very important, and reading away at his psalms, no doubt with many a side-look at the passers-by to see were they impressed. On the scene arrives a little girl, badly in want of a play-mate, for which *rôle* she immediately cast poor Brendan, "seeing his face so beautiful and bright," and not at all impressed by the big psalter. When he paid her no heed, she jumped into the carriage beside him. But Brendan was not going to stand such liberties from any little girl, and he took the

[1] *Betha Brenainn*, p. 101. [2] *Ib.* [3] *Ib.* p. 102.

reins and gave her a good beating, and sent her home "crying and screaming to where her father and mother, the king and queen, were biding." The noise brought Bishop Erc from his preaching, and he was very angry with Brendan when he heard the cause. As a penance he ordered him to spend the night in a certain cavern near at hand. Perhaps he was a little uneasy about the severity of the penance, for he himself, instead of seeking a lodging, spent the night outside the cave so as to be near his charge. Any anxiety he may have felt must have been quickly set at rest, when presently he heard Brendan singing his psalms as loud as he could. And he kept up the singing until morning.

If ever a little saint was liable to get into mischief it was young Ciaran,[1] afterwards famous as the founder of Clonmacnoise. His mother, Darerca, a bustling, capable housewife, quick of decision, and even quicker of tongue, had no intention of "spoiling" her children by "sparing the rod," and Ciaran had, perhaps, a special acquaintance with that unit of the mediaeval educational apparatus. Darerca, a Kerry girl, was on a visit to her kinsfolk in the midlands, when she met a young Ulster craftsman, called Beoit, who after a short wooing, carried her off as his bride to his northern home. There were political troubles in Ulster even in those days, and it may have been in consequence of them that Beoit and his young wife had to flee to Connacht, where we find them presently established at a place called Magh Ai in the modern Co. Roscommon. Here there soon gathered around them a numerous family of sons and daughters. Ciaran, the third son, was the most famous; but it is to be remembered to Darerca's credit that her children all grew up to be very holy men and women. Two of the girls, Lugbec and Rathbeo, became nuns; while the third, Pata, was,

[1] *Betha Ciarain* (in *Book of Lismore*), pp. 118 *et seq.*

like Anna the prophetess, a pious widow. Four of the sons became priests, and the fifth, Cronan, was a deacon.

Darerca, that excellent woman, believed in making her boys and girls useful from an early age. So we find Ciaran set to herd the cattle, and gather honey from the honeycombs "like the other little boys of the hamlet," and grind meal at the quern, and go for water to the well, and run errands of all descriptions.

Even when he was sent to "learn his psalms" from Deacon Justus, he used to have to do some herding, and the most charming tales are told of little Ciaran's hours of study in the forest and of a fox that used to carry his copybooks to and fro between him and his teacher, Justus. In these lonely days in the woods, Ciaran learned to have great love and sympathy for the wild things that lived there; and like St. Francis many centuries later he had pity for a hungry wolf, and cured a poor, sick horse, and did many other acts of kindness to the "little brothers and sisters."

Notable housekeeper and manager as she was, Darerca had enough to do to keep her sturdy flock of boys and girls comfortably clad. One day she was dyeing the cloth she had woven for them, and Ciaran very much interested in the process was watching her eagerly. (Being the sort of woman she was it will not surprise us to learn that the colour Darerca had decided on was a good "sensible" dark blue.) There was an old tradition, or superstition, that it was not "lucky" to have boys or men about the house when dyeing was in progress, so Darerca sent young Ciaran off with scant ceremony. He resented this treatment very much, and his mother, in truth had "no luck" with her dyeing, until he relented. First the cloth came out with a dark grey stripe on it; next it came out all white. "O Ciaran," says his mother then, "do not now spoil the dye-stuff for me, but let it

be blessed by thee." Ciaran blessed it, " and there never was made, before or after, dye-stuff as good as it was, for though all the cloth of the Cenel Fiachrach were put into it, it would make it blue, and finally it made blue the dogs, and the cats, and the trees against which it came." [1]

At last young Ciaran, communing with himself in the woods, saw that it was time for him to leave home and fare forth " to learn wisdom." The fame of Finnian of Clonard had come to Magh Ai, and it was to the great school by the banks of the Boyne that Ciaran determined to go. He asked his father and mother for a cow, for that was the way in which these boys of long ago paid for their schooling. Darerca refused peremptorily. So Ciaran went to the byre, and blessed the dun cow—the pick of the herd—and she and her calf followed him all the way to Clonard.

There are some who may blame Darerca for refusing the cow to Ciaran. But perhaps a mother might think she understood the poor woman's reason for withholding it. The career which this little boy of hers had chosen, the career of a saint, was made up of such terrible hardships—of superhuman fastings, of long nights of sleepless prayer, of scourgings to blood, of heroic penances—that she could not bear to think of her little son enduring them. Perhaps the refusal of the cow was meant as a desperate expedient for stopping him, and keeping him by her own side.

Another mother who would have set an obstacle to her son's vocation, if she could, was the mother of St. Columban, the founder of Luxeuil and Bobbio. Before his birth she dreamt of a star that rose from her bosom, and made the whole world bright with its rays. Contrary to the usual practice in families of a high social standing,

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[1] *Betha Ciarain*, p. 121.

such as hers appears to have been, she did not send away her boy to be "fostered," but had him carefully educated in her own *dún*. Finally, when by the advice of a wise nun in the neighbourhood, young Columban knew that he must leave home, if he would be saved from the moral dangers that lay in wait for him there, she threw herself across the threshold to bar his egress. Over her prostrate body he went forth—never to see her again.[1]

It was in autumn of "the tinted woods," when the rowan trees were hung with their coral berries, and the blackberries were ripe "in the brake beside the well," that Senan of Inis Cathaig was born. His father, Gergenn, and his mother, Coimgell, were well-to-do farmer folk, and there are pleasant pictures in the *Betha Shenain* in the *Book of Lismore* of life on an old Irish farm. Like all little boys, young Senan liked to take an active part in the work, and was especially busy on the occasion of their periodical removals from one farm to another. "Senan would go a day or two days before them to make a house and sheds and farmyard and every needment besides which they required to be ready before them. Now Senan used to do this for love of helping every one who needed it, and he used to have a new house ready for his family."

On one occasion, it would appear that his mother appeared on the scene before Senan's preparations were complete. "His mother was angry with him about that matter, and she said this to him: 'O son of clan and kindred,' saith she, 'thy profit to us is small.' 'O mother,' saith he, 'be at rest, and thou shalt have what is needful.' When they were saying these words, they beheld coming towards them in the air the sheds and the farmyards, the ties and all the needments which they required, and which they had left in the place from whence they came. And

[1] Jonas's *Vita Columbani* i, 3.

these things were laid down before them in the place in which it seemed right to them to settle." [1]

Like Briga, the mother of Comghall in far-away Dalaradia, this Kilkenny woman had to part with her boy, when their prince called him up for military service. Senan hated the plundering that was done by the soldiery with whom he was associated, so he ran away from their company, and hid himself in a barn, where he promptly fell asleep. The troops went back to their own district without him, and Senan had many dangerous adventures, many hairbreadth escapes, before he came back to his father's farm.

Gergenn was, evidently, a man of substance and had some of his cattle as far away as "Iorus in the West." Thither he sent Senan one day to bring them home to Magh Lacha. The tide was in, and Senan not being able to take the short cut across the strand, determined to seek a lodging for the night in the house of a neighbouring Chieftain. This was churlishly denied him, and he returned to the shore with no more cheerful prospect than that of waiting by it until the ebb should leave the strand bare. But for Senan the tide which "waits for no man" broke its own laws. "As his oxen went before him, on the shore of the sea, he saw the sea-strand [bare] before him. Then he drives his oxen over the strand. Then, as Senan lifted his feet over high-water mark on the land, he heard the wave behind him striking against his heels. His mind changes then, and this he said. 'Sufficient for me is the length of time I have been at this layman's work.' Then he breaks the spear that was in his hand, and makes a cross thereof, and thrice he prostrates himself by it to God. . . So Senan went and left his oxen with his father, and goes afterwards and receives tonsure from Cassidan, who had a church in the district of Iorus." [2]

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[1] *Betha Shenain*, p. 57. [2] *Ib.* p. 59.

We get glimpses in the Old Irish "Lives" of other mothers, and their little saint-sons. Very appealing in its tenderness is the story of the "little lame boy," Mochua of Balla,[1] whom his father, Becan, despising for his infirmity, would not count among his sons, and set to the lowliest tasks. St. Comghall took him to Bangor to be educated, perhaps at the suggestion of the boy's mother, Cumne, who may have seen in this expedient the only possible chance of getting justice done to her poor crippled boy. Afterwards it is possible she may have thought the discipline of Bangor too hard for Mochua —and indeed the poor youngster seems to have spent a tearful time there [2]—for we find her taking him away from Comghall on a visit to her own folk.[3]

. . . . .

One does not know whether it is the art or the sincerity of the old Hagiologists, which makes these women seem to us so lifelike. The misty centuries have no power to dim the living colours in which their portraits have been painted for us. When we see the face of Briga (worn and lined with trouble, but beautiful with love) bending over her sleeping boy; or Eithne, young and lovely in her "sunny bower," gazing on the flower face nestled against her silken robe; or Cara listening with delight to the tales Ita has to tell her of Brendan's angel-nurses; or Darerca, the young *bean a' tighe*, bustling about her household tasks; or Coimgell busy on her husband's farm; or Cumne, lonely for her "little lame boy," we feel that these, indeed, are real women who have lived, and loved, and worked, and suffered, and dreamed, under this dear Irish sky of ours, and in this land which their sons' dust has made the sacred place it is.

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[1] *Betha Mochua Balla* in *Book of Lismore*, p. 138.
[2] *Ib.*
[3] *Ib.* p. 139.

The Women of the Castles

IT fell out upon a day that the poet, Tadg Dall O hUigin, lost the favour of his patron, O'Conor Sligo. The reason for the chieftain's displeasure was that Tadg had addressed a poem to O'Donnell, "in which officious ill-wishers not few in number, professed to have detected disparagement of O'Conor Sligo and his sept." After a year's banishment the poet bethought himself of an expedient for procuring his restoration to Grace. He addressed to Mór, the wife of his angry patron, a poem in which he begs that she should act as his mediator with her lord, and suggests a way in which she might easily bend the latter to her will. The suggestion is somewhat audacious—being no other than that she should go "on strike" from all her duties as consort of the ruling chief :—

"In sheltering of me, O face of magic, now co-operate ; what though the matter be an hard one—I could teach thee to effect it with thy smooth thick tresses and with thy white hand alone. The languishing eye no more lift up to him, until that I and Donall be at one ; spend not neither spare his substance, nor say : 'thine increase makes me to rejoice.' Seek not to add to O'Conor's fame [who is a leading chief] of Tara's surface, strive not thou to avert blame from him ; throughout the banquet's

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Authorities : Standish Hayes O'Grady's "Catalogue of Irish MSS. in British Museum" ; Stanihurst's *De Rebus Hibernicis*, and "Description of Ireland" (prefixed to Holinshed's "Chronicles," vol. vi) ; Luke Gernon's "Discourse of Ireland" (in Litton Falkiner's "Illustrations of Irish History") ; "Annals of the Four Masters" ; Lugaidh O'Clery's "Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell ;" Hardiman's "Irish Minstrelsy" ; Hyde's "Love Songs of Connacht."

whole duration sit and mope, nor any given man remember [*i.e.* recognise and salute]. In ratifying of peace-compacts have no part—help not thou to assuage the borderers—till for thy poet thou have gotten peace from fierce displeasure of the race of Conor. Thy hand wash not, nor yet thy bosom and the teeth having the sheen of pearl: come not to meet Sligo's host [*i.e.* the O'Conors all convened], be absent from carouse and minstrelsy. Allay the anger of the river Duff's arch-chief, even as thou lullest the wrath of [Sligo's] bay; the fury of man's tempest smooth away, even as the winter's wind thou makest to be dumb." [1]

The curious little poem has the merit of portraying in broad outline, with a few deft strokes, the *rôle* and personage of a great lady of mediaeval Ireland, the chieftain's wife, the "Woman of the Castle." We see her proficient in those feminine arts by which a husband's love may best be held, skilled in the science of dress and personal fascination: to braid her fair thick tresses, to enhance the beauty of her blossom-white hand, her snowy bosom, her teeth of pearl; to lift her charming eyes to his in wifely love. We see her helping her lord to manage his great possessions, governing his household with liberality and prudence, binding his followers to him through her generosity, making friends for him through her gracious bearing, exercising a princely hospitality, and shedding the gentle influence of her presence over many a feast. An important political *rôle* is also hinted at. She was often called upon "to ratify a peace contract," "to help to assuage the borderers." And as in olden times men held that in a good king's reign, the seasons were propitious and the earth and waters bountiful, so under her beneficent sway the wrathful seas were assuaged and the tempests lulled.

[1] Translation in Standish H. O'Grady's "Catalogue of Irish MSS." p. 411.

To complete this picture of a great Irish lady we have but to fill in the outline, and place her in her proper setting. As it happens the materials for the work are close at hand and abundant. In the sixteenth century England, then engaged in one of her many " conquests " of Ireland (or at least, in a very long and bloody attempt thereat), began to " write up " our country, and a series of social studies of Irish life followed in quick succession from her printing presses. These studies were for the most part propaganda—and the writers did not trouble to seek further afield for their " facts " than in the resuscitated pages of Giraldus Cambrensis, in which they found all the disgusting details of Irish " savagery " they needed to convince the world that the war they had declared on Irish freedom was in reality a sort of crusade —a war between civilisation and brutish barbarism. So Campion, Stanihurst, Spenser, Hanmer, Barckly, Moryson follow each other—and they all follow Cambrensis—without as much as a change of letter sometimes so that you will find the same paragraph repeated word for word in each of them. It is clear, therefore, that not much weight can be attached to their testimonies as to Irish manners and customs—but occasionally an odd fact can be discovered in them, the truth of which is attested by other evidence. It would appear that English " propaganda " over-reached itself. Such frightful pictures were spread abroad—in ballad and broadsheet [1] as well as otherwise—that at the end no English settlers could be induced to come and colonise the regions which had been purposely cleared for them. So directions had to be given to the hired pens of the period to change their style a little. And hence we have pamphlets like Payne's " Brief Description " and Luke Gernon's " Discourse of Ireland," which make out that the Irish were a decent enough kind

[1] Derrick's " Image of Ireland " is a notable example.

of people, with whom a sensible Englishman could live very happily and sociably indeed. In these latter studies the truth comes out; as it does to a certain extent in Stanihurst's later study of Irish manners.

The third source of information as to home life in mediaeval Ireland—and especially in the castles—is to be found in the accounts of friendly foreign observers whom Ireland's new political alliances attracted to her shores. Of these we have an interesting example in the account of Irish manners and customs written by a Spaniard who visited Desmond in 1580.[1]

But the most important and most reliable studies are those we owe to our own *savants*: Keating, Lynch, O'Sullivan, etc., and still more to our own poets. From all these sources it is quite possible to reconstruct the stage on which the Great Lady of mediaeval Ireland played her part. When the *mise en scène* is complete we have but to summon her on to it.

In Stanihurst's time the nobles lived in strong stone castles, with a watch-tower on the top in which a sentinel stood always on guard. As these castles did not provide room for the lavish hospitality which was the custom of the period, there were usually attached to them large halls built of clay or turf and roofed with sedge or straw, in which the lord and his lady presided at meal-times over a great gathering of followers and guests. The first meal was served before daylight in winter, and in summer about "the seventh hour." After it the lord of the castle departed with his retinue and friends to whatever business they had in hand—a hosting, mayhap, or a hunting party, or "an assembly on the hill," or in times of peace and relaxation a leisurely stroll in the fields.[2] The menfolk out of the castle, its lady had time to look

[1] Published in *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. v. p. 17.
[2] *De Rebus Hibernicis*, p. 32.

to the oiling of the household machinery and to superintend the various works which were carried on in it. In their own special apartment the ladies of the household " embroidered rare tissues and wove golden webs." In another place the " artificers " were at work—finishing beakers, forging weapons, tempering swords to a right blue, riveting spear-heads to shafts. In yet another the dyers were giving mantles and rugs their crimson hue.[1] The preparation of food and drink for the enormous household must have been a whole business in itself ; and the lady of the castle ere she sat herself down among the train of young girls she had gathered around her in " fosterage " had, no doubt, to assure herself by personal observation that the steward had seen to it there should be no lack of eatables and drinkables for any muster of guests the evening should bring. There were no inns in the mediaeval Gaeltacht, and it was understood that a traveller was welcome at whatever castle he presented himself.

We have, amongst other documents, the personal narratives of two such travellers to help us to visualise life in a mediaeval Irish castle. We can present ourselves either in the sedate company of the Spanish delegate, who accompanied James Fitzmaurice, or in the more lively company of Luke Gernon. The conditions described by the latter differ a little from those prevailing when Stanihurst wrote. Instead of the banquetting hall being a separate building, it was situated in Gernon's time in an upper storey of the castle itself. He invites us to join a company that are riding to a " coshering." [2] :

" We are come to the castle already. The castles are built very strong, and with narrow stairs for security. The hall is the uppermost room ; let us go up ; you shall

[1] O'Grady's " Catalogue," p. 431.

[2] Gernon explains " coshering " as " public invitations, by occasion of marriages, neighbourhood or the like, and for the present open house."

not come down again until to-morrow. Take no care of your horses, they shall be sessed among the tenants. The lady of the house meets you with her train. I have instructed you before how to accost them." The proper way, it appears, was to kiss each of them. "At solemn invitements," says Luke in that previous instruction to which he here refers, "the Benytee (*bean a' tighe*), so we call the goodwife of the house, meets you at the hall dore with as many of her female kindred as are about her all in a row: to leave any of them unkist, were an indignity though it were done by the lord president."

"Salutations past you shall be presented with all the drinks[1] in the house, first the ordinary beer, then aquavitae, then sack, then old-ale; the lady tastes it, you must not refuse it. The fire is prepared in the middle of the hall, where you may solace yourself till supper-time, ye shall not want sack and tobacco. By this time the table is spread and plentifully furnished with variety of meats. Neither shall there be wanting a pasty or two of red deer. The dish which I make choice of is swelled mutton, and it is prepared thus. They take a principal wether, and before they kill him, it is fit that he be shorne, being killed they singe him in his woolly skin like a bacon, and roast him by joints with the skin on, and so serve it to the table. They say that it makes the flesh more firm, and preserves the fat. They feast together with great jollity and healths around; towards the middle of the supper, the harper begins to tune, and singeth Irish rhymes of ancient making. If he be a good rhymer, he will make one song to the present occasion. Supper being ended, it is at your liberty to sit up, or to depart to your lodging, you shall have company in both kind. When you come to your chamber, do not expect canopy and

[1] The Spanish delegate enumerates *eight* kinds of drink as served up in Irish castles.

curtains. It is very well if your bed content you, and if the company be great, you may happen to be bodkin in the middle. In the morning there will be brought unto you a cup of aquavitae. The aquavitae or usquebath of Ireland is not such an extraction, as is made in England, but far more qualified, and sweetened with liquorice. It is made potable, and is of the colour of Muscadine. It is a very wholesome drink, and natural to digest the crudities of the Irish feeding. You may drink a naggin without offence, that is the fourth part of a pint. Breakfast is but a repetition of supper. When you are disposing of yourself to depart, they call for Dogh a dores that is to drink at the door. There you are presented again with all the drinks in the house, as at your first entrance. Smack them over, and let us depart." [1]

From Stanihurst, Moryson, the Spanish delegate and others we glean other details which help to complete Gernon's lively description. Stanihurst tells us that the place of honour was assigned to the Lady of the Castle, who presented a grave and stately appearance in her head-dress of folded linen, her mantle, her saffron coloured tunic with its enormous sleeves. We learn from Moryson that the young girls of the household "both gentlewomen and citizens," at a signal from the *bean a' tighe*, retired from the hall, as soon as "they had in curtesy pledged one or two healths." [2] The lady herself remained "throughout the banquet's whole duration," showing a friendly countenance to her guests, and treating them with the distinction they merited.

Such open-handed hospitality was the daily rule of the household. But on special occasions there were "general feasts of bestowing"—those "literary assemblies" in respect of which Keating claims for his

[1] "Illustrations of Irish History," p. 360.
[2] *Ib.* p. 227.

country the pre-eminence in generosity and hospitality over every other nation in Europe: "the stress of generosity and hospitality among the old foreigners and the native Irish was such that they did not deem it sufficient to give to any one who should come seeking relief, but issued a general invitation summoning them, in order to bestow valuable gifts and treasure on them." It is in connection with two such "general invitations of hospitality" that the name of that typical Irish great lady, Margaret O'Carroll, wife of O'Conor Faly, will be best remembered. In the *Annals* of Duald MacFirbis we read under date 1451—the year of Margaret's lamented death from cancer of the breast, the following graphic account of the historic festivals.

"A.D. 1451. A gratious yeare this yeare was, though the glory and solace of the Irish was sett but the glory of heaven was amplified and extolled therein; and although this is a year of grace [Jubilee] with the Roman Church, it is an ungratious and inglorious yeare to all the Learned in Ireland, both philosophers, poets, guests, strangers, Religious persons, soldiers, mendicant, or poore orders, and to all manner and sorts of the poore in Ireland, also for the general support of their maintenance's decease, to wit Margrett, daughter to Thady O'Carole, King of Ely, O'Connor Faly, Calvach's wife, a woman that never refused any man in the world for anything that she might command, only besides [*recté*, except only] her own body. It was she that twice in one year proclaimed to and commonly invited (i.e. in the dark days of the yeare, to witt, on the feast day of da Sinchell in Killachy) all persons, both Irish and Scottish, or rather Albaines, to two generall feasts of bestowing both meate and moneyes, with all manner of gifts, whereunto gathered to receave gifts the matter of two thousand and seaven hundred persons, besides gamesters and poore men, as it was recorded in a Roll to that purpose, and that accompt

was made thus, *ut vidimus* viz. the cheife *kins* of each family of the learned Irish was by Gilla-na-Naemh Mac Egan's hand, the cheife Judg to O'Conner, written in the Roll, and his adherents and kinsmen, so that the aforesaid number of 2700 was listed in that Roll with the Arts of *Dan*, or poetry, musick, and Antiquities. And Maelin O'Maelconry, one of the cheife learned of Connacht, was the first written in that Roll, and first payed and dieted, or sett to supper, and those of his name after him, and so forth every one as he was payed he was written in that Roll, for feare of mistake, and set downe to eate afterwards. And Margarett on the garrots of the great church of Da Sinchell clad in cloath of gould, her dearest friends about her, her clergy and Judges too. Calvagh himself on horseback by the churche's outward side, to the end that all things might be done orderly, and each one served successively. And first of all she gave two chalices of gould as offerings that day on the Altar to God Almighty, and she also caused to nurse or foster two young orphans. But so it was we never saw nor heard neither the like of that day nor comparable to its glory and solace. And she gave the second inviting proclamation (to every one that came not that day) on the feaste day of Assumption of our blessed Lady Mary in harvest, at or in the Rath-Imayn, and so we have been informed that that second day in Rath-Imayn was nothing inferior to the first day. And she was the only woman that has made most of preparing high-wayes and erecting bridges, churches and mass-books, and of all manner of things profitable to serve God and her soule, and not only that, but while the world stands her very many gifts to the Irish and Scottish nations shall never be numbered. God's blessing, the blessing of all saints, and every our blessing from Jerusalem to Inis Gluair be on her going to heaven, and blessed be he that will reade and heare this, for blessing her

Soule. Cursed be that sore in her brest that killed Margrett."

The reputation for hospitality and bountifulness was not confined, as we have seen, by Keating to the Gaels. Among the "Sean-Ghaill" there were women who were not unworthy to be named if not *beside*, at least *after* Margaret O'Carroll. Amongst these another Margaret claims pride of place. Like her namesake, Margaret Fitzgerald, sister of Gerald, the Great Earl of Kildare, and wife of Piers Butler, Earl of Ossory, is remembered in Kilkenny as a great builder. Tradition may have proved itself too liberal in the number of bridges, churches, and other buildings it has put to her credit, but her claim to one foundation at least rests on an indisputable basis. She founded the famous grammar school in the west end of the churchyard of St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, where Peter White "the happy schoolmaster" taught for so many years, and whence so many illustrious men went forth to uphold the reputation of Irish scholarship in every university in Europe. Stanihurst, who knew her well (and must often have seen her as she came to hear the "proper impes" of that school construe) has left us a full-length portrait of her.[1]

Her match with a son of a house, whose enmity with her own had been long hereditary and traditional, had been brought about by the politic devises of her brother, Gerald. But once married to a Butler, Lady Margaret espoused all her husband's quarrels with an impetuosity all her own. When his claim to the Earldom of Ormond was challenged by another Butler, Piers himself was so hotly pursued that he had to go "on the run"—"to hover and lurk in woods or forests," as Stanihurst puts it. Thither Margaret, that devoted wife, accompanied him and though she was about to become a mother,

[1] Holinshed's "Chronicles," vol. vi. pp. 273, 278, 280.

endured all the hardships of his lot, and lived on the meanest country fare to be with him. One day a great longing for wine came upon her, a longing which she confided to her husband and his trusty lackey, James White. The two of them "ambushed" the enemy Butler, and on his death Lady Margaret had, as her husband promised her, "store of wine," and all other earthly goods.

When Earl Gerald was summoned to England to answer for his conduct, his brother-in-law Piers Butler did not remain very loyal to him. In fact he showed no squeamishness about stepping into his place as Lord Deputy. Earl Gerald returned, restored again to royal favour through the good offices of the Marquis of Dorset, whose daughter Lady Elizabeth Grey he had married, and was very wroth to find high in his brother-in-law's councils an old enemy of the Geraldines, Robert Talbot of Belgard.

The murder of Talbot by James Fitzgerald, one Christmas Eve, led to open war between the brothers-in-law and their respective factions. Lady Margaret is blamed by Stanihurst for the part she played in this fratricidal quarrel. "A rare woman," he calls her somewhat ruefully, "able for wisdome to rule a realm, had not her stomach overruled her knowledge." The first round resulted in a win for Kildare, who got Piers Butler deposed from the office of Lord Deputy, and himself appointed. This success made Lady Margaret furious; and she and her husband stopped at nothing in the way of accusations against her brother's loyalty, until he was once more recalled to England to defend himself, and Piers was re-elected Lord Deputy in his stead. "In which office, being himself (save only in feats of arms) a simple gentleman he bare out his honour, and the charge of government very worthily, through the singular wisdom of his countess, a lady of such a port, that all estates of the realm crouched unto her; so politic, that nothing was

thought substantially debated without her advice; manlike and tall of stature, very liberal and bountiful, a sure friend, a bitter enemy, hardly disliking where she fancied, not easily fancying where she disliked; the only mean in those days whereby her husband his country was reclaimed from sluttishness and slovenry to clean bedding and civility. But to these virtues was linked such a self liking, such an overweening and such a majesty above the tenure of a subject, that for assurance thereof she sticked not to abuse her husband's honour against her brother's folly." Stanihurst hints as plainly as he dared that Kildare's ultimate ruin, and the tragic fall of the house, was due almost directly to her. She repented of her part in the tragedy afterwards, poor lady—but it was then too late.

Another equally strong-minded woman was her sister, Lady Eleanor.[1] She had been married to MacCarthy Reagh—another political match of her father's or brother's making—but at the period of the execution of her nephew, Silken Thomas, and her five brothers, was a widow. Passionately concerned for the restoration of her house in the person of her young nephew, Gerald, she gave her hand to an old suitor of hers, Manus O'Donnell of Tirconaill, in order to secure a refuge for the boy, and weave around him a great system of alliances. Here is Stanihurst's account of the transaction:—

"This noble woman was at that time a widow, always known and accounted of each man that was acquainted with her conversation of life, for a paragon of liberality and kindness, in all her actions virtuous and godly, and also in a good quarell rather stout than stiff. To her was O'Donnell an importunate suitor. And although at sundry times before she seemed to shake him off, yet considering the distress of her young innocent nephew,

[1] Holinshed, vol. vi. p. 304.

how he was forced to wander in pilgrimage from house to house, . . smarted in his tender years with adversity, before he was of discretion to enjoy any prosperity, she began to incline to her wooer his request . . and in fine indented to espouse him." Which she accordingly did.

But when Manus O'Donnell, on whose territory the English fleet had now converged with its big guns, had arranged for young Gerald's conveyance into France, Lady Eleanor, who had got all she wanted out of him, treated him to some very plain speaking indeed. She called her husband amongst other things "a clownish curmudgeon," and a "butcherly cut-throat," "and in this wise trussing up bag and baggage, she forsook O'Donnell and returned to her country."

It is pleasant to know that other O'Donnells were more fortunate in their wives than poor Manus was on this occasion (as he was married four times altogether—and very happily in the other three instances—Lady Eleanor's brief passage through his life did not render him a permanent misogynist!). His great-grandfather, Niall Garbh, and his grandfather, Aodh Ruadh, seem to have been particularly blessed in their spouses.

The former was married to Finola, a daughter of the famous Margaret O'Carroll and Calvach O'Conor. In the very year in which her illustrious mother held her "feasts of bestowing" we find Finola active in the *rôle* of treaty-maker, which Tadg Dall indicates as part of the *châtelaine's* duties. A great war had broken out between the O'Neills and O'Donnells, and in 1433 Finola is mentioned amongst those who arranged between the two a treaty of peace. Two years later her husband, Niall Garbh, was taken prisoner by the English, and brought to London. For four years he was in captivity, then as his ransom was being arranged and he had been taken to the Isle of Man to conclude the business, he suddenly died (1439). After his death, Finola married Hugh Boy O'Neill, but was

left a widow a second time before 1447, in which year the *Four Masters* record her entrance into the Convent of of Killeigh—the scene of one of her mother's great festivals.

"Finola, daughter of Calvach O'Conor Faly and of Margaret daughter of O'Carroll the most beautiful and stately, the most renowned and illustrious woman of her time in all Ireland, her own mother only excepted, retired from this transitory world to prepare for life eternal, and assumed the yoke of piety and devotion in the monastery of Cill-achaidh." She was to spend many years in the "austere devout life," whether Duald Mac Firbis shows "the blessings of guests and strangers and poor and rich, poet philosophers and archpoet-philosophers," following her. Her death is recorded on July 25, 1493.

Her daughter-in-law, another Finola, daughter of Conor na Srona O'Brien and wife of Aodh Ruadh O'Donnell, followed closely on her sainted predecessor's footsteps. Mooney has left on record how as the Franciscan Friars sat in Chapter at Ross-Errilly, there rode up to the gates of the monastery the Lady Finola, who had made the long weary journey all the way from Tirconaill, to beg the "Sons of Life" to make a foundation in her husband's country. So impressed were they by her pleadings and still more by the thought of the toilful pilgrimage she had made to obtain her heart's desire that the Provincial not only consented, but relinquished his office to be the first guardian of the monastery of Donegal which Lady Finola and her husband founded (1474).

In 1505 Hugh Roe died "having gained the victory over the Devil and the world, and after Extreme Unction and good Penance, and was interred in the monastery of Donegal." Then Lady Finola built a little house for herself beside the monastery, laid aside the rich attire she had worn during her husband's lifetime for the habit of St. Francis, and devoted the rest of her life to prayers,

almsgiving, and all other sorts of good works. She spent more than twenty-two years in this saintly life, and died on the first day of Lent, 1528, " a woman who as regards both body and soul, had gained more fame and renown than any of her contemporaries, having spent her life and wealth in acts of charity and humanity."

A woman of another calibre than these gentle saints was the wife of their descendant, Aodh Dubh O'Donnell, Inghin Dubh, the daughter of James MacDonnell of the Isles, and mother of the celebrated Aodh Ruadh. Lughaidh O'Clery describes her as " the head of advice and counsel of the Cinel Conaill, and though slow and very deliberate and much praised for her womanly qualities, possessed of the heart of a hero and the soul of a soldier." [1] Her one aim in life, which she pursued with a passionate energy and unshakeable determination, was the aggrandisement of her great son, Aodh Ruadh. From the very day of his birth she set herself to construct the edifice of his future power, binding to him hitherto hostile branches of the Cinel Conaill, and the Cinel Eoghain by the sacred bonds of fosterage. The marriages she planned for her daughters, Siobhan and Nuala, had the same end in view. Siobhan became the wife of Hugh O'Neill, afterwards Earl of Tyrone; and Nuala married her cousin Niall Garbh, the heir to the claims of the race of Calvach O'Donnell. When her son was in captivity, she strained her every resource to secure his liberation. In the meantime she was occupied in clearing the way to the Chieftainship against his escape. " She had many troops from Scotland and some of the Irish under her call and control, in her hire and pay constantly and especially during the time that her son was in prison, and confined by the English." But she had them before that, and the fact was alleged by Sir John Perrott as his excuse for kid-

[1] " Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell," p. 39.

napping Aodh Ruadh. The Scottish lady, Sir Hugh O'Donnell's wife, he complains, "ruled that country very much and thereby not only nourished Scots in those parts, but also certain of the MacSwynes (a strong and disordered kind of people there)." By the aid of her Scottish mercenaries Inghin Dubh defeated an attempt of Donnell (the eldest son of Sir Hugh, by his first wife), to depose his father " now grown weak and feeble." " It was a great cause of anguish and sickness of mind to Inghin that Donnell should make such an attempt . . . she therefore assembled all the Cinel Conaill who were obedient to her husband, and a great number of Scots with them." A battle was fought on the shores of Teelin Bay, and Donnell was defeated and slain.

On the escape of her son, Inghin Dubh, by the aid of her Scots and MacSwineys, secured the election of Aodh Ruadh as Chieftain of Tirconaill, her husband having been persuaded to resign. The election was perhaps not valid, for a great many of the electors absented themselves—these nobles supporting the claims of the descendants of Calvach O'Donnell, the rival branch of the reigning family.

Once in the saddle, Aodh Ruadh had no need of his mother's helping hand to keep his seat firmly. For the next nine years Inghin Dubh had little to do but rejoice in her son's triumphs.

Then the tide turned—or as the pious O'Clery puts it, " the Lord checked Aodh and his brothers in the course of their victories "—to make the path to heaven easier for them.

The defection of Niall Garbh, the first check in Aodh Ruadh's victorious career, was speedily followed by other great misfortunes—the death of Inghin Dubh's third son, poor young Manus at the hands of Niall Garbh ; the death through a broken heart of her old husband, Aodh Dubh ; the destruction of the monastery and castle

of Donegal; the disaster of Kinsale—and most woeful news of all, the death of her great son in Spain.

From that moment, the old principle of action which animated Inghin Dubh's heart having ceased to operate, its place was taken by another. She was essentially a woman of a single purpose, and that purpose, up to her son's death, was the securing of his greatness. Now with the same intensity she cherished another purpose: vengeance on the man whose treachery had brought on all this train of sorrow. The destruction of Niall Garbh was now her one end and aim. She made her daughter Nuala leave him—and when all her surviving children sailed from Ireland with Hugh O Neill, she was content to remain behind them in Ireland until her purpose was fulfilled. The last notice we glean of her is contained in that strange letter of hers to Bishop Montgomery, in which she charges Niall Garbh with complicity in Sir Cahir O'Doherty's rising.[1] Of her lonely old age in Kilmacrenan, where some hundred acres were assigned her, we know nothing except that she had the satisfaction of seeing the ruin of her enemy.

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The marriages of these aristocratic Irish girls having been mostly matters of politics, it is clear that romance played little part in their lives. Occasionally, however, that love "which laughs at locksmiths,' made his way through the carefully guarded portals of the *grianan* where they sat long hours over their embroidery, and touched their maiden dreams with his rosy wings. One or two charming love-stories have come down to us—two of them, at least as immortal as the songs with which they are bound up.

The song of *Eibhlin a Ruin* enshrines the memory of the love tale of Eibhlin Kavanagh and Carroll O'Daly.

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[1] "Flight of the Earls," p. 216.

Carroll O'Daly, a young Connacht gentleman, gifted among other accomplishments with much skill as a poet and musician, met and loved the fair Eibhlin Kavanagh, who, on her side returned the feeling. His suit, however, did not find favour with Eibhlin's relatives, and the lovers were separated. During Carroll's absence, a false report was borne to Eibhlin that he had married another, and on the strength of it she was induced to accept the suitor whom her family had selected for her. On the eve of her marriage Carroll returned, and introduced himself in the guise of a wandering harper to the feast where the unwilling bride of to-morrow sat heavy-hearted by her bridegroom. Towards the middle of the supper at the moment when, as Luke Gernon tells us, "the harper begins to tune, and singeth Irish rhymes of ancient making," Eibhlin's sad ears were suddenly ravished by a strain which she alone recognised, for Carroll had composed it for her in the happy days gone by. She looked intently at the harper—and her eyes met the pleading eyes of her faithful lover, while borne on the exquisite air came the words :

"A dtiocadh tú nó a bhfanadh tú a Eibhlín a Rúin ?"

Before the song was ended she had found means to answer Carroll that indeed she "would come and would not stay," and the glad "hundred thousand welcomes" rang out through the hall making her free of that realm of true love and romance where she was to "walk in beauty" for ever.

A sadder tale is that of Una MacDermott, the *Una Bhán* of the exquisite song :

"O fair Una, thou blossom of the amber locks,
Thou who art after thy death from the result of ill counsel,
See, O love, which of them was the best of the two counsels,
O, bird in a cage, and I in the ford of the Donogue.

"O fair Una, like a rose in a garden you,
And like a candlestick of gold you were on the table of a queen,
Melodious and musical you were going this road before me
And it is my sorrowful morning spoil that you were not married
to your dark love."

Una, the daughter of the MacDermott, a wealthy gentleman, had given her love to Tomas Costello, called Tomas Laidir (the strong) from his great bodily strength. As the Costello was poor, MacDermott forbade him his daughter's presence, and arranged her marriage with a wealthy rival. When the match was made the girl's father sent invitations far and wide to a feast to celebrate the betrothal. Among the invited guests was Tomas. Healths were drunk according to custom, and MacDermott bade his daughter stand up and drink a health to the person she liked best, meaning the bridegroom elect. Una stood up indeed, but instead of her *fiancé* she singled out Tomas Laidir for the favour. Her father, wild with rage, struck her a blow, and Tomas left the feast in a tumult of angry sorrow.

After that Una fell ill—and the leeches told her father that she would surely die if she were not allowed to see her lover once more. Overcoming his pride Costello came back to the MacDermott castle, and was guided to the room where Una lay like a broken lily, on her couch of sickness. She held out her little wasted hand to him, and when she felt his strong warm fingers clasping it safe, a great joy and contentment came upon her, and she fell into a sweet sleep, the first she got for months—the sleep of healing. For a long time Tomas sat thus holding her hand, but at last, as none of the other members of the family showed themselves, he felt loath to remain any longer under a roof, where such grave discourtesy was shown him, and he went forth. "He called to his servant to saddle the horse and be going. He then got on his horse and rode slowly, slowly from the house,

thinking every moment he would be sent for, and that they would ask him to return; accordingly he remained near the house, and there was no messenger coming to call him back. His servant was tired waiting for him to go on, and he thought it long the time that his master was riding without going far from the house. He began to say to his master that MacDermott's people were only humbugging him, and he put it into his head that they were doing an act of treachery on him. Costello did not at first believe that it was so, and when no one was coming to him, while the servant kept continually putting this suspicion into his head, he began, himself, to believe it, and took his vow and oath by God and Mary that he would never again turn back and never speak a word to Una or one of the MacDermotts unless he should be called back before he went across the ford of the little river, the Donogue. When he did go into the river he would not go across it, and he remained in the water for half an hour or more, ever hoping that a messenger would come after him. Then the servant began to revile him: 'I think it a great wonder,' he said, 'for a gentleman like you to be cooling in this water for any woman at all in the great world; is it not small your pride to endure a disgrace like that?' 'That's true for you,' said the Costello, and he drove his horse up upon the bank. Scarcely was he up on the dry ground when there came a messenger after him in a full run from Una, calling to him to come back to her quickly; but the Costello would not break his vow, and he did not return. After Costello's going from her, Una did not awake for an exceedingly long time. On her awaking at last, the first thing she did was to send for the Costello, but he was gone. She got frightened at that, and sent a messenger after him, but the messenger did not come up in time. . ."

Poor Una died of a broken heart and was buried on an island in Lough Cé. The night after her burial Costello

came to the brink of the lake, and swam out to the island, where he threw himself weeping on her grave. The second and third night was spent likewise. In one of these vigils he composed the lovely song, which wedded to strains of exquisite sadness seems to breathe forth not his own sorrow alone, but that "pity beyond all telling which is hid in the heart of love" itself!

"When Tomas Laidir died he was buried as he himself directed, in the same graveyard and island in which Una was buried, and there grew an ash-tree out of Una's grave and another tree out of the grave of Costello, and they inclined towards one another, and they did not cease from growing until the two tops were met and bent upon one another in the middle of the graveyard." [1]

[1] Hyde's "Love Songs of Connacht," p. 50 *et seq.*

The Women of the Towns

TO use a very modern phrase, carrying a very modern appeal—no woman in mediaeval Ireland seems to have had such "a good time" as the woman of the towns. It may be that the lively and bustling scenes, which the chroniclers of the mediaeval Irish municipalities set before our eyes, incline us to think more of the youths and maidens that took part in them and less of their sedate elders; it may be that the glimpses of manners and customs we get through a study of old municipal records show us more often than is the case with our other Annals, the young girls *en scène*. Whatever be the cause it is the fact that while we think of the "Woman of the Castle" as the annalists have painted her in her grave and gracious, and serene maturity, and the "Woman of the Countryside" as prematurely aged by the hardships of her life and the horrors of almost constant war, the "Woman of the Towns," summoned by the historian's art from her tomb in whatever ancient abbey she lies—in Galway, or Waterford, or Dublin, or Kilkenny—takes on, most readily, the form and vesture of a charming girl.

Her vesture! How pretty she must have looked,

Authorities: Holinshed's "Chronicles," vol. vi; the MSS. of the Corporations of Waterford, Galway, etc.; Account of Jesuit Missions in Ireland, in *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. ii. p. 43 *et seq.*; Lenihan's "History of Limerick"; Hardiman's "History of Galway"; O'Flahertys "Iar-Connacht"; "Life of Luke Wadding," by Fr. Francis Harrold, O.F.M.; "Description of Ireland in 1598," edited by Rev. Edmund Hogan, S.J.; O'Heyne's "Irish Dominicans," edited by Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P.; "Cromwell in Ireland," by Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J.; *Cambrensis Eversus*, by Lynch.

dressed as Luke Gernon describes her for us,[1] "tall, slender and upright," with her shining gold tresses bound up "in curious knotts and devises," and adorned with coloured ribbon. The mantle she wears is bright-coloured, too, "of greene, redd, yellow and other light colours with fringes diversified." Her long-waisted corslet bodice is laced over a silken vest; her hanging sleeves are of satin; her quilted skirt is "of rare artifice," and her dainty waist is bound with a silk girdle "the tassell whereof must hang downe poynt blank to the fringe of her pety-cote." She loves pretty jewellery. "Broad silver buttons of goldsmiths worke" adorn her bodice; on her white neck she wears "a carkanett of goldsmiths worke besett with precious stones . . . and at the end of them a crucifix." She wears "braceletts and many rings." Thus adorned, she flits like some "coloured Asian bird" through many an animated scene the historians of our towns have painted for us.

We see her thus (one of our earliest glimpses of her) taking her share with her sisters in the "Entrenchment of New Ross." The old Anglo-Norman ballad[2] relates how the town of New Ross "which no walls did then enclose"

> ". . . had cause of dread
> In the feud two barons spread"

and determined to entrench itself. A large army of workmen were engaged to build round the place 'walls of mortar and of stone' But though they were well paid "small advance these fellows made"—and the townsmen therefore determined to do the work themselves:

> "Vintners, drapers, merchants, all
> Were to labour at the wall.
> From the early morning time
> Till the day was in its prime."

[1] "A Discourse of Ireland" ("Ill. of Irish History"), p. 141.
[2] Translation in D'Arcy McGee's "Art MacMurrogh."

Each day a different guild or section of the population took its part in the work. On Monday the merchants and their sons, the priests, the mariners ; on Tuesday, the tailors and clothworkers ; on Wednesday the butchers, turners, shoemakers ; on Thursday the fishermen and corn merchants ; on Friday, the wainwrights ; and on Saturday the blacksmiths, masons, carpenters. And thus the work went gaily on to the music of flute and tabours and the sound of merry carrolling :

"Then on Sunday there came down
All the dames of that brave town ;
Know, good labourers were they,
But their numbers none may say.
On the ramparts there were thrown
By their fair hands many a stone ;
Who had there a gazer been,
Many a beauty might have seen.
Many a scarlet mantle too,
Or of green or russet hue ;
Many a fair cloak had they
And robes dight with colours gay.
In all lands where I have been
Such fair dames working I've not seen.

. . . .

Many a banner was displayed
While the work the ladies aid ;
When their gentle hands had done
Piling up rude heaps of stone,
Then they walked the foss along,
Singing sweet and cheerful song ;
And returning to the town,
All these rich dames there sat down;
Where with mirth, and wine, and song
Passed the pleasant hours along.
Then they said a gate they'd make,
Called the ladies', for their sake,
And their prison there should be ;
Whoso entered, straightway he

Should forego his liberty.
Lucky doom I ween is his
Who a lady's prisoner is;
Light the fetters are to wear
Of a lady kind and fair."

The tone of gallantry in which the Anglo-Norman minstrel concludes his reference to the "Dames of New Ross" was familiar enough to the girls of all the mediaeval Irish towns. Nobody has ever been wooed in a more charming fashion; and while their morals were well protected by various ordinances of the grave city fathers, opportunities of social intercourse between the young people of the two sexes were frequent, and gave opportunities for marriages of affection to a greater extent than was usual in other sections of mediaeval Irish society, where "arranged" marriages were the rule. We read of the pretty custom of "Valentines" which was prevalent in mediaeval Cork, and very likely in other Irish towns. On the eve of St. Valentine the young men of the city gathered together in their headquarters—for the bachelors formed a sort of guild, and had a captain or leader of their own who was recognised by the municipality. In Dublin this officer was called "Mayor of the Bullring," and Stanihurst [1] explains that he was elected by the citizens "to be as it were capteine or gardian of the batchelers and the unwedded youth of the city" and to look after their manners and morals. In Galway we meet him under the title of "Captain of the Youngmen."[2] There the names of the unwedded and eligible girls of the town were written on slips and put in an urn, whence they were drawn by the youths. To whatever lady he thus "drew," the young man was supposed to send his own name "with much ceremonial either written or

[1] Holinshed's "Chronicles," vi. p. 24.
[2] Hist. MSS. Com. x. App. 5, p. 493.

painted" ; and if the lady accepted his homage she sent him back *her* name either worked in silks, or set in gems and precious stones, according to the wealth and social position of the parties. Then it was understood that she was to be visited by her "valentine" once a week, and the weekly visit was an occasion of much feasting, and dancing and music in which all the young people of her set took part. The custom may have led to abuses, for the Jesuit Fathers when they came to Cork in the seventeenth century, set themselves to abolish it. Instead of the names of girls the young Cork men (who had been gathered in great numbers into the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary) were given the names of saints to draw, and to hold for their patron for the whole of the following year.[1]

When the young city girl became betrothed, her *fiancé* seems to have been very generous in the way of gifts. What bride of to-day, whose "numerous and costly wedding presents" you will find set out in any society paper, but must envy Miss Arthur of Limerick, daughter of the famous Dr. Thomas Arthur, and the gifts which were laid at her feet, when she got engaged to Bartholomew Stackpole of the same city. The list includes: "a small goulde cross ; a goulde ring weighing 22 carats ; 2 small goulde rings, 5 carats each ; £6 in silver, a small case of instruments, a payer of embroidered gloves, 4 yards of satten ribbon, 2 yds of broad satten ribben ; 1½ yds. of 'boane lace' worth 8s. a yard ; 1 blak hood of double curle ; 1 payer of whyte gloves, 1 payer of Spanish leader shoes ; ten yards of black figured satten ; 9 yards of sky coloured tabby ; 1 whyte fann with silver handle ; 1 crowne lowe hood ; 4 yards of French serge with silver laces, 1 large taffety hood, two combs, one payer of perfumed corduan gloves, a small silver seal." [2]

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[1] *Spic. Oss.* ii. p. 50.
[2] Lenihan's "History of Limerick," p. 145 *n*.

Of the marriage itself we hear little, but we can presume a very prettily dressed bride, a picturesque procession of the young couple's friends through the decorated streets from the bride's home to the church where it was celebrated, followed by much banquetting and dancing and music—as was the custom at wedding-feasts all the world over. In Dublin, we learn from Stanihurst, the Mayor of the Bull-ring and "his crew" would be waiting for their late comrade, the bridegroom, outside the church; whence after the completion of the ceremony they would first of all conduct him to the market place, and compel him there "with a solemn kiss for his *Ultimum Vale* to do homage to the Bull-ring" ("an iron ring that stickett in the cornemarket, to which the bulls that are yearelie bated be usually tied.")[1] It was the ceremonial by which they signified that he had passed from the company of the "batchelers" and the dominion of "the mayor of the Bull-ring," to take his place among the grave citizens with responsibilities.

When the marriage feasts were over and the newly wedded couple had settled down together, the bride found a strenuous and busy life awaiting her. If her husband was a merchant he would be much away—in Spain, it may be, buying wines, etc., or in France purchasing "as wel mercery as grocery and drapery, both linnen and woollen" for those "well replenished shoppes" which won the enconiums of even Barnaby Rich: "for there is neither silk-man nor milliner in London, that can shew better wares (for the quantitie) than some of those do that bee called Merchants of Dublin." During these absences the merchant's wife had the responsibility of the household—consisting of many maid-servants and apprentices. They were not an easy class to deal with, if we may judge from the frequency of the City statutes

[1] Holinshed's "Chronicles," vi, p. 24.

which concern themselves with them.[1] But the capable townswoman not only managed to do her duty towards them with most edifying results but to merit well of her fellow citizens by eminent public services, as two striking examples will show. Thus we read of the pious Dublin lady, Dame Elinor Ball (*née* Bermingham) who instructed the maids and serving men of her household so thoroughly in the Christian doctrine that they were able to exercise a sort of apostolate among the other homes in which they afterwards found themselves. "Like skilled scholastics sent out from a most excellent school," says Fr. Holing,[2] "they won for Christ not only their fellow servants, men and women, but very often their masters and mistresses." They were much sought after for this very reason.

It was during her husband's absence in Spain that Margaret Athy, wife of Stephen Lynch, mayor of Galway (A.D. 1506) began the building of the Abbey of St. Augustine's Order of Hermits, on a hill near the sea on the south side of the town. When Mayor Stephen returned the first thing he saw as his ship sailed into the bay was a stately church and steeple, on a spot where at his departure not a stone had been laid; "but," says the chronicler, "when he landed and learned that it had been erected by his own wife, in honour of St. Augustine, his surprise was converted into joy, and he knelt down on the sea-shore, and returned thanks to Heaven for having inspired his lady with that pious resolution." Margaret afterwards made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James of Compostella, and was only prevented by illness from going as a pilgrim to the Holy Land.[3]

Another munificent Galway woman was Margaret

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[1] Hist. MSS. Com. x, App. 5, pp. 336, 438, etc.
[2] *Spic. Oss.* i, p. 105.
[3] O'Flaherty's *Iar-Connacht*, p. 40.

Joyce, wife of a later Mayor, Oliver French, "who for charity and good commonwealth's sake built severall stone bridges through all Connacht from Galway to Sligoe." One day as she sat superintending the work on a bridge an eagle let fall into her bosom a golden ring set with a precious stone not known to any lapidary, and this ring, according to Roger O'Flaherty, who tells the story,[1] was, up to his time, preserved among her descendants.

It speaks well for the husbands of these ladies that so far from putting an obstacle in their way they aided them not only by their encouraging attitude towards their enterprises, but by active co-operation. In this manner many works of charity, such as the building of hospitals for the sick poor were carried out. The Walshes built a hospital in Waterford. During the mayoralty of another Lynch, St. Brigid's hospital, on the east side of Galway, was built. For its maintenance a charming practice was devised by some clever and pious Galway lady. Every Sunday, the mistress of each household in turn sent out the prettiest of her maid-servants, daintily attired, with a plate and cup in her hand, to call on her neighbours and gather contributions for the Hospital. The collector's visit was timed for the dinner hour, and the children had each their share in the good work as they deposited their alms in cup or plate; and they ate their Sunday dinner with a new zest, remembering that the poor and the sick—and He who loves to walk the earth in their guise—had shared it with them.

The little scene our imagination thus conjures up of the townswoman seated by her merchant husband's side in their beautiful home, with children and apprentices and serving people, dressed in their Sunday finery, and gathered round a liberally spread table, indicates the

[1] *Iar-Connacht*, p. 40.

atmosphere of love and Christian charity in which her children were reared. Children were looked on as the greatest gifts of God, and welcomed accordingly. Foreign writers, like Moryson, were struck by the profusion and gaiety which marked Christening Feasts ; and in Kilkenny and Galway, at least, these were an occasion of such expense that the municipality had to interfere with a protective statute. It would appear that " open house " was kept as long as the mother " kept her bed," and we can imagine that there were so many to avail themselves of the right to be entertained that it became a nuisance. Accordingly in the year 1536, Richard Martin, being Mayor of Galway, and Dominick Lynch and George Skerrett bailiffs, it was " ordered and statuted for the comon welth of this town that what soever woman, of what degre she be, bearing child shall not make common banckes [*i.e.* banquets] and great expence as in tyme paste, but shall keap hir accustomid beade [*bed*] during hir pleasure withoute any resoorte of comon housse haunters save onely hir frendes such as she liste on payn to forfayte twenty shillings. And also whatsoever man or woman goeth in to anny such housse asking or seking for meat and drincke unpraied or bidden, to paye and forfayte six shillings and eightpence." [1] A custom characterised by Moryson as " barbarous," but which to us seems rather pretty, was that of tying in the corner of the cloth in which the child was wrapped as it was borne to its christening, a piece of gold or silver to be offered to the officiating priest.[2]

Great care was devoted to the education of the children. Most of the towns had excellent schools, the fame of which has come down to us. Thus in Galway there was the great school where generations of Lynches taught, and

[1] Hist. MSS. Com. x. App. 5, p. 407.
[2] Ill. of Irish History, p. 319.

which was continued even after its suppression at the instance of Ussher. Limerick had for school-masters, men like Richard Creagh and Thomas Leverous—afterwards Primate, and Bishop of Kildare respectively. Wexford youths were taught by the Devereuxes and Fr. Robert Rocheford. But the most famous school in Ireland was that founded in Kilkenny by Piers Butler and his celebrated wife, Maigread Mhór, the daughter of the Earl of Kildare, and presided over by Peter White " the happy schoolmaster." A Dublin boy, who was sent to it, writes lyrically of its excellence and of the multitude of distinguished men who swarmed forth from it like the Greeks from the Trojan horse. As we read the names in Stanihurst's list, and learn their subsequent histories, we must give willingly to Peter White the credit his grateful pupil claims for him. But we must not give him *all* the credit. Before these boys, who were to grow into such distinguished men, came under Dean White's ferule, they had graduated from even a better school—that which is gathered round a pious and well-educated Catholic mother's knee. Let us give these " valiant women " of our mediaeval Irish towns " of the fruit of their hands," let " their works praise them in the gates." And their best work—better than the hospitals, and bridges, and even the churches they built—were their children.

Every Irish Catholic mother regards it as her dearest wish to have a son a holy priest. It seems to set the seal of God's favour on all her work as a mother. If this is so, God's seal was set in a striking manner on the work of some Waterford women. Thus Mary Walsh, who married Thomas Wadding (Mayor of Waterford in 1596) had three most distinguished Jesuit sons. Peter became in his time " Professor of Divinity at Louvain, Antwerp, Prague and Gratz, Chancellor of the Universities of Prague and Gratz, and author of several books. Another son, Fr. Michael, was also a famous professor of Theology,

Rector of the Seminary of St. Jerome, Puebla, of the College of St. Ildefonse, Mexico, of the College of Gautemala. Renowned for learning and sanctity he wrote a remarkable book on ascetic Theology. The third, Luke, was a Professor of great fame in Spain, consulting Theologian of the Inquisition, Lecturer on Jurisprudence in Madrid."[1] Surely Mary Walsh's works "praise her in the gates," sound forth the triumphs of this Irish lady's early teachings to all the countries of the earth.

In like manner are the praises of her sister-in-law, Anastasia Lombard, wife of Thomas Wadding's brother, Walter, sounded. She gave to the Church two celebrated sons. Ambrose was a Jesuit professor in the University of Dillingen; and Luke was the great Franciscan, the founder of St. Isidore's, the patriot priest whose name shall be for ever associated with those of Owen Roe and Rinuccini.

The mention of Rinuccini reminds us that both he and Scarampi when they were in Waterford, enjoyed the splendid hospitality of a second Thomas Wadding, son of the Thomas Wadding and Mary Walsh aforesaid. His kinsman, Fr. Francis Harold, in his interesting Life of Fr. Luke Wadding, O.F.M., which prefaces the second edition of the latter's *Annales Minorum*, tells us of how the younger Thomas Wadding, in the true spirit of the Irish Catholic merchant princes of the period, put at the disposal of the *nuncii* his magnificent town house and country seat, his horses and carriages and servants. He was a man of rare culture, who made a deep impression on the great Italian ecclesiastics, who were his guests. But he was more. He was a man of deep faith. He could have saved something out of the wreck of his fortune when the Cromwellian storm had spent itself in Waterford

[1] "Description of Ireland in 1598," edited by Rev. G. Hogan, S.J., p. 162 *n*.

—enough to live on in the homeland. But he could not face the deprivation of the Sacrament, and the comforts of religion; and he and his son exiled themselves to France. Fr. Harold speaks of some moving letters he had written thence.

All these Waterford families: Waddings, Lombards, Comerfords, Walshes, Sherlocks, Wises, and the Whites of Clonmel were closely related by ties of blood or marriage. Intensely devoted to their religion, highly cultured, wealthy, hospitable and charitable, the society they formed must have been a very pleasant one indeed, and it is not to be wondered at that their sons went forth from it to uphold the fame of Irish learning and culture, and Ireland's devotion to the Catholic Faith in all the universities of Europe. In addition to the Waddings, some of whom have been enumerated above, there were: Peter Lombard, afterwards Primate and Archbishop of Armagh, who won an extraordinary reputation for learning at Louvain; Fr. Stephen White, S.J., praised by Ussher as "a man of exquisite knowledge in the antiquities not only of Ireland, but also of other nations"; Fr. Paul Sherlock, S.J., a writer of great distinction and rector of the Irish Colleges of Compostella and Salamanca; Dr. Nicholas Comerford, S.J., a graduate of Oxford, a D.D. of Louvain, and a learned polemical writer, and many others.

It was not "out of wind" as we say, that these men got their greatness. They had been carefully brought up in model Catholic homes. Into such a home, that presided over by Anastasia Lombard, wife of Walter Wadding, it will be our privilege to enter if we so desire, led by no less qualified a guide than her grandson, Fr. Francis Harold. In his Life of his celebrated uncle, Fr. Luke Wadding, to which we have already referred, Fr. Harold gives us a detailed account of his hero's childhood, and the influences that presided over it. Walter

Wadding and his wife Anastasia, were both noted for "their integrity of life, their devotion to the Catholic Faith, their Christian piety, their zeal in educating their children, and their extraordinary generosity towards the poor." They had a large family of ten boys and four girls, of whom Luke, the eighth boy, and the eleventh child was born on October 16, 1588, and baptised on the 18th, taking as was right the name of the Evangelist, whose feast fell on that day. Luke learned his letters very young, and when he could read and recite the Catechism, his mother gave him a Breviary of Pius V, which he read continually—mingling thus, says his biographer shrewdly, the useful with the agreeable, he drew from it not only food for his piety, but the wherewithal to become a good Latinist and acquire the ecclesiastical style. All the children, boys and girls, seem to have possessed copies of the Breviary, and it was their parents' delight to hear them recite in "alternating choirs" the Office of the Blessed Virgin, which they did every day, the Penitential Psalms, twice a week, and the Office of the Dead once a month. Every day, the family said the Rosary in common, and morning and evening they recited "the Exercises of a Christian man." In 1602, when Luke was only fourteen, his father and mother both died—"as they had loved each other in life, so in death they were not separated"; and deceased about the same time, they were laid together in the Wadding Tomb in the Franciscan Abbey, Waterford, of which they had been benefactors.

Benefactors of Abbeys, and Convents, and Churches these townswomen were in an eminent degree. Many of the Franciscan and Dominican Houses in Ireland still treasure among the Church plate which has survived so many spoliations, beautiful chalices presented by the pious and generous ladies of the mediaeval Irish cities. In connection with the famous Dominican Abbey at

Athenry we read of many such benefactors.[1] The widow of David Wedir, a burgess of Athenry, deserves to be remembered. She glazed the large window behind the high altar in the church, and all the windows in the choir. She also built a stone bridge over a stream leading to the town. Her husband, who had also been a great benefactor of the abbey, died in Bristol and was buried in the Dominican Abbey there. "His widow, however, commissioned the lector of Athenry, Friar Norse, to bring his remains back to Athenry, where she had obsequies celebrated for him for a whole fortnight, attended by Dominicans from Roscommon, Sligo, Strade, Dublin, Lorragh and Portumna, as well as Augustinians and Carmelites."

Another munificent Athenry couple were Nicholas Godsun and his wife. Besides giving tithes to the abbey, the husband used to keep twenty-four friars of the abbey in cloaks, his wife providing the same number with habits. This custom they kept up for more than twenty-two years. They also had four friars at dinner during Lent, and two for the rest of the year. Sylina Lynch, of the famous Galway family, used to send a barrel of fish and a pipe of wine every Lent, and kept up the custom for more than twenty years. Walter Lynch, of the same family, used to entertain the friars whenever they came to Galway, and gave them two gold chalices, with silver-gilt patens. He also gave a stone altar, and made several new windows in the wall near it. Johanna Kelly gave a gilt ciborium and a new gradual. William Butler and his wife Agnes Boventer gave money gifts besides bringing a beautiful picture from Flanders. Other women gave vestments, chalices, statues, books, candlesticks, pictures.

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[1] See Fr. Ambrose Coleman's valuable Appendix to his edition of O'Heyne, p. 80.

One hopes that the lady of the mediaeval city had in most cases her children reared before her husband was called to mayoral honours. For the duties of hospitality which she had to help him to discharge must have taken her full time and energies. Here is what Richard Stanihurst[1] has to tell us of the experiences of Mayor Patrick Sarsfield and his "buxom wife"—and Stanihurst had his information "straight from the stable" so to speak, his father James Stanihurst, Recorder of Dublin, being the Mayor's special friend and confidant:

"The hospitality of the mayor and the sheriffs [of Dublin] for the year being, is so large and bountifull, that soothlie very few officers under the crowne of England keep such a great port, none I am sure greater. The mayor, over the number of officers that take their dailie repast at his table, keepeth for his year in manner open house. And albeit in term time his house is frequented of the nobilitie as of other potentats of great calling: yet his ordinary is so good that a verie few set feasts are provided for them. They that spend least in their mayoralty (as those of credit, yea and such as bore the office have informed me) make an ordinary account of five hundred pounds[2] for their viand and diet that year; which is no small summe to be bestowed in housekeeping, namelie where vittels are so good cheap and the presents of friends diverse and sundrie.

"There hath been of late years a worshipfull gentleman, named Patrick Sarsfield, that bare the office of the mayoralty in Dublin, who kept so great port in this year as his hospitality to his fame and renown resteth as yet in fresh memory. One of his especial and entire friends entring in communication with the gentleman, his year

[1] Holinshed's "Chronicles," vi, p. 22.

[2] Owing to the change in value of money this would represent almost twice as many thousands to-day.

being well near expired, moved question to what he thought his expenses all that year amounted. Truly James (so his friend was named) quoth master Sarsefield, I take between me and God, when I entered into mine office, the last saint Hierome his day (which is the morrow of Michaelmasse on which day the mayor taketh his oath before the chief baron, at the exchequer within the Castle of Dublin) I had three barns well stored and thwackt with corn, and I assured myself that anyone of these three had been sufficient to have stored mine house with bread, ale and beer for this year. And now God and good company be thanked, I stand in doubt whether I shall rub out my mayoralty with my third barn, which is well nigh with my year ended. And yet nothing smiteth me so much at the heart, as that the knot of good fellows that you see here (he meant the sergeants and officers) are ready to flit from me, and make their next year's abode with the next mayor.

" And certes I am so much wedded to good fellowship, as if I could maintain mine house to my contentation, with defraying of five hundred pounds yearly I would make humble suit to the citizens to be their officer these three years to come. Over this he did at the same time protest with oath, that he spent that year in housekeeping twenty tuns of claret wine, over and above white wine, sack, malmesey, muscadel, etc. And in verie deed it was not to be marvelled : for during his mayoralty, his house was so open, as commonly from five of the clock in the morning to ten at night, his buttery, and cellars were with one crew or other frequented. To the haunting of which guests were the sooner allured, for that you should never mark him or his wife (such was their buxomnesse) once frown or wrinkle their foreheads, or bend their browes, or glowme their countenances, or make a sour face at any guest, were he never so mean. But their entertainment was so notable, as they would sauce their bountiful

and dainty fare with hearty and amiable cheer. His porter or any other officer durst not for both his ears give the simplest man that resorted to his house Tom Drum his entertainment, which is, to hale a man in by the head, and thrust him out by both the shoulders. For he was fully resolved that his worship and reputation could not be more distained than by the currish entertainment of any guest . . .

" Some of his friends that were snudging peniefathers, would take him up very roughly for his lavishing and his outrageous expenses as they term it. Tush my masters (would he say) take not the matter so hot; who so commeth to my table, and hath no need of my meat, I know he commeth for the good will he beareth me; and therefore I am beholding to thank him for his company: if he resort for need how may I bestow my goods better, than in relieving the poor? If you had perceived me so far behind hand, as that I had like to have brought haddock to paddock, I would patiently permit you both largely to control me, and friendly to reprove me. But so long as I cut so large thongs of mine own leather as that I am not yet come to my buckle, and during my time I keep myself so far afloat as that I have as much water as my ship draweth: I pray pardon me to be liberal in spending, sith God of His goodness is gracious in sending.

" And in deed so it fell out. For at the end of his mayoralty he owed no man a dotkin. What he dispended was his own: and ever after during his life, he kept so worthy a standing house as that he seemed to surrender the prince's sword to other mayors and reserved the port and hospitality to himself."

Stanihurst enumerates other mayors who kept " worshipful port," and he goes on to speak of the hospitality of the citizens. " And not only their officers so far excel in hospitality, but also the greater part of the city is

generally addicted to such ordinary and standing houses, as it would make a man muse which way they are able to bear it out, but only by the goodness of God, which is the upholder and furtherer of hospitality. What should I here speak of their charitable alms, daily and hourly extended to the needy? The poor prisoners both of the Newgate and the Castle, with three or four hospitals, are chiefly if not only relieved by the citizens."

Whatever may have been the feelings of her husband—and Patrick Sarsfield, at least, would have been willing to be Mayor for three years longer—one imagines that the Mayor's lady for all her "buxomness" was well enough content when the year of office came near its end, and the approach of "Saint Hierome his day" saw another mayor and his lady enter upon their duties. Such strenuous hospitality must have been very wearing on the strength and nerves of the housewife who had to preside over it. Probably she was glad to slip into ordinary life again—her duties done—and to think of the quiet corner in household and church, where she could make leisurely and not unwilling preparation for her transference to the quietest corner of all—the tomb in the cathedral or abbey she and her husband had long ago made ready for themselves.

. . . . .

Happy those women who were sheltered in the peace of the tomb in good time. For a great tempest was to burst upon the fair cities of Ireland, leaving their stately homes roofless and ruined, and filling their streets with unburied corpses.

On the 11th and 12th September, 1649, Oliver Cromwell stormed Drogheda. Of the scenes which took place there a vivid description has been given by a young English soldier who took part in the assault: one Thomas á Wood, brother of Anthony á Wood, the historian of Oxford.

In the preface to the latter's *Athenae Oxonienses* we read how Thomas after his return to Oxford would entertain his family circle with an account of the things he had witnessed during his campaign in Ireland. "It was the winter after the siege. At which time, being often with his mother and brethren, he would tell them of the most terrible assaulting and storming of Drogheda, wherein he himself had been engaged. He told them that three thousand at least, besides some women and children, were, after the assailants had taken part, and afterwards all the town, put to the sword on the 11th and 12th of September, 1649. At which time Sir Arthur Aston, the governor, had his brains beat out, and his body hacked to pieces. He told them that when the soldiers were to make their way up to the lofts and galleries in the church, and up to the tower where the enemy had fled, each of the assailants would take up a child, and use it as a buckler of defence when they ascended the steps, to keep themselves from being shot or brained. After they had killed all in the church, they went into the vaults underneath, where all the flower and choicest of the women and ladies had hid themselves. One of these, a most handsome virgin, arrayed in costly and gorgeous apparel, kneeled down to Thomas á Wood, with tears and prayers, to save her life; and being struck with a profound pity, he took her under his arm, and went with her out of the church, intending to put her over the works to shift for herself. But a soldier, perceiving his intentions, ran his sword through her body. Whereupon á Wood, seeing her gasping, took away her money, and flung her down over the works."

Scenes as bloody, involving the townswomen in a tragedy no less terrible, happened during the sack of Wexford. The Abbé MacGeoghegan has left it on record how "two hundred ladies of Wexford, who sought with tears and upon their knees to propitiate the tyrant's

rage, were massacred at the foot of the cross in the market square " :—

" They knelt around the cross divine,
The matron and the maid ;
They bowed before redemption's sign,
And fervently they prayed—
Three hundred fair and helpless ones,
Whose crime was this alone
Their valiant husbands, sires and sons
Had battled for their own.

" Had battled bravely, but in vain—
The Saxon won the fight,
And Irish corpses strewed the plain
Where Valour slept with Right.
And now the man of demon guilt
To fated Wexford flew—
The red blood reeking on his hilt
Of hearts to Erin true !

" He found them there—the young, the old,
The maiden and the wife ;
Their guardians brave in death were cold,
Who dared for *them* the strife.
They prayed for mercy—God on high !
Before *Thy* Cross they prayed,
And ruthless Cromwell bade them die
To glut the Saxon blade !

" Three hundred fell—the stifled prayer
Was quenched in women's blood ;
Nor youth nor age could move to spare
From slaughter's crimson flood.
But nations keep a stern account
Of deeds that tyrants do !
And guiltless blood to Heaven will mount,
And Heaven avenge it too." [1]

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[1] Michael J. Barry in the " Spirit of the Nation."

But the women who were massacred in their hundreds in the churches of Drogheda, and around the cross in Wexford had a happier fate than some of their sisters in other Irish cities.

After the surrender of the Irish forces in 1652, and the departure of the Irish "swordmen" for Spain and other foreign countries, the towns of Ireland lay undefended before the tyranny of the Cromwellians. These fanatics determined to clear them of their "papist" inhabitants, and accordingly various orders were issued, applicable to the various towns, and culminating in a printed proclamation issued early in 1656 ordering "all Irish and Papists" to withdraw to a distance of two miles from all walled towns and garrisons before the 26th May of that year. Of the scenes which took place when the townsfolk, and their wives and children were turned homeless and adrift to beg "their bit and sup" or die of hunger by the wayside, we have many contemporary descriptions. In Galway the order took effect in the depths of winter. "The wretched inhabitants, without distinction of age or sex (except a few who were "bedrid" or too old to walk) were driven out of the town in the midst of winter and were forced to take shelter by the ditches and the poor cabins in the country, without fire or sufficient clothing, in consequence of which many fell victims to the uncommon inclemency of the season. Thus deprived of its inhabitants, who were succeeded only by soldiery, the town presented the appearance of a military camp, without either order or regularity, and soon fell to decay. The superb houses, which in the language of the *Annals*, were 'fit to lodge kings and princes,' and are described as the best built and most splendidly furnished of any in the kingdom, were seized upon and occupied by the lowest of the populace, until they were completely ruined." [1]

[1] Hardiman's "History of Galway," p. 137.

Even before their final expulsion, the people of Galway had suffered bitterly enough. The city had surrendered "on terms" in 1652; but the conquerors had scarcely entered in, when "the terms" were scandalously broken. "In a short time," says Lynch, in his *Cambrensis Eversus*, "they commenced to rob the citizens of their property." They levied a huge contribution, which the Galway people were unable to pay, and which finally resulted in many of them giving up their homes in the town. Lynch, in his *Life* of his uncle, Bishop Kirwan, relates that "unless the contribution was paid to the last farthing, at a certain hour, every Saturday, of which notice was given by beat of drum or sounding of trumpets, the soldiers rushed to the houses of the inhabitants, and, with their muskets pointed to the breasts of the inmates, threatened them with immediate death, unless paid whatever they thought proper to demand; and when from the continual payments, the town's people were unable any longer to discharge it, such articles of household furniture as the soldiery could find, even to the clothes of the women, were seized and sold in the market-place for whatever they could bring; so that the return of Saturday, being the period of payment and visitation, seemed to the inhabitants to realise the idea formed of the day of judgment, the sounding of the trumpets striking them with almost equal terror."

The sufferings of the women of Galway, under the rule of the low-born rabble which then held sway in it, are described by the same author,[1] *à propos* of another incident: "Not long ago, a fellow named Hurd, who was promoted I hear from his carpenter's shop to a lieutenancy in the army, was governor of Galway in the absence of Peter Stuburs, the superintendent of commerce, who had once been a pedlar. Hurd, under the

[1] *Cambrensis Eversus*, vol. ii, p. 207.

prompting of some evil spirit, issued a proclamation that no person should dare to appear in the mantle. To persecute the Irish for the religion of their ancestors, to rob them of their father's property was not enough, if the ancient dress itself were not doomed to the same proscription. But lo! next day the unseemly exhibition in the streets of Galway—most of the women appearing in men's coats—high-born ladies, who had been plundered of all their property by the rapacious soldiers, sinking with shame before the gaze of the public, with their ragged or patched clothes, and sometimes with embroidered table-covers, or a stripe of tapestry torn down from the walls, or some lappets cut from the bed curtains, thrown over their head and shoulders. Other women covered their shoulders only, with blankets or sheets, or table cloths, or any other sort of wrapper they could lay their hands on. You would have taken your oath, that all Galway was a masquerade, the unrivalled home of scenic buffoons, so irresistibly ludicrous were the varied dresses of the poor women."

The expulsion of the Catholic inhabitants from Cork had taken place some years previously, and one of the Jesuit Fathers who witnessed it has given us a vivid account of it:[1]

"A proclamation was issued by the President of the Council of War, commanding all Catholics either to abjure their religion or to depart from the city without delay. Should they consent to embrace the religion of the Parliament, they were allowed to remain and keep their goods and property. Should they, however, adhere pertinaciously to popery, all, without exception, were to depart immediately from the city. Three cannon-shots were to be fired as signals at stated intervals before nightfall, and any Catholic found in the city after the third signal

[1] *Spic. Oss.* vol. ii, p. 52.

was to be massacred without mercy. Then it was that the constancy of the citizens in the faith was seen. There was not even one found in the city who would accept the impious conditions offered, or try to keep his property and goods with the loss of his faith. Before the third signal all went forth from the city walls, the men and women, yea even the children and the infirm ; and it was a sight truly worthy of heaven to see so many thousands thus abandoning their homes, so many venerable matrons with their tender children wandering through the fields, or overcome with fatigue lying on the ground, in ditches, or on the highways ; so many aged men, some of whom had held high offices in the State and belonged to the nobility with their wives and families, wandering to and fro, knowing not where to find a place of refuge ; so many merchants, who on that morning abounded in wealth, now without a home in which to rest their weary limbs. Yet all went forth with joy to their destruction, abandoning their houses and goods, their revenues and property, and wealth, choosing rather to be afflicted with the people of God on the mountain-tops and in caverns, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, than to enjoy momentary pleasure and temporal prosperity with sin."

. . . . .

But our last glimpse of the Women of the Mediaeval Irish Towns is neither as they pass out of their cities, homeless and destitute refugees, nor as they cower through the streets of Galway in their improvised garments, deprived of their mantles, the sport and laughing-stock of Hurd and his low-born "black and tans." As our first greeting to them was given when they laboured, a dainty train, on the Walls of New Ross, so let our farewell be spoken as they fight side by side with their men on the Walls of Limerick—boldly standing in the breach, "nearer our men," says the Williamite chronicler, "than their own."

Countrywomen

OUR Irish historians, as Mr. Standish O'Grady has very acutely observed, are essentially aristocratic! They "give no plebeian names," he points out somewhere; and *à fortiori* they describe no plebeian manners or habits of life. The traditional attitude of the Irish historian towards "the common people" is curiously revealed by Keating in his great indictment of the historical methods of the "New Foreigners"—the Barckleys, Spensers, Camdens, Morysons, Campions, etc., to whom "the credit of an historian should not be given." "They act after the fashion of the beetle," he proclaims scornfully, and prefer the emanations of the rubbish heap to the fragrance of the most delicate field flowers, the lilies and roses of the garden. "They take notice of the ways of inferiors and wretched little hags, ignoring the worthy actions of the gentry." They "stoop to afford information on the characteristics and on the habitations of peasants and wretched petty underlings . . . to give an account of the hovels of the poor, and of miserable people," and neglect "the palatial princely mansions of the nobles." [1]

Authorities: Keating's *Foras Feasa*; Miss Hull's "Cuchullin Saga"; "The Lives of the Saints in the Book of Lismore"; Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland"; Adamnan's "Vita S. Columbae"; Luke Gernon's "Discourse of Ireland"; Philip O'Sullivan's "Compendium of the Catholic History of Ireland"; Rev. E. Hogan's "Distinguished Irishmen"; Account of the Jesuit Mission in Ireland from 1641 to 1650 (*Spic Oss.* ii, p. 43 *et seq.*).

[1] *An Dionbhrollach*, pp. 5, 7, 55.

In these modern democratic days we feel inclined to make a counter-complaint against Keating and his fellow historians for having erred in the opposite direction. And the historians are not the only offenders. Our old Irish romance writers and poets are equally "snobbish." No modern *feuilletoniste* can surpass them in their love of luxurious and elegant settings. The royal halls which they describe for us have ceilings of silver and pillars of bronze "glittering with gold and set with carbuncles, so that day and night were equally light therein"—carvings of red yew are on the couch-partitions. "Games and music and singing there, heroes performing their feats, poets singing, harpers and players on the *timpan* striking up their sounds." And very gorgeous the vesture of the heroes and fair ladies who dwell in these radiant abodes. Here is a description of the attire of Cuchulainn, when he rode forth from Emain Macha for the wooing of Emer: "Around him a beautiful crimson five-folded tunic, fashioned with a brooch of inlaid gold . . . a shirt with a white hood, interwoven red with flaming gold." The elegance of a lady's *toilette*, and its accessories, as portrayed in the old Irish romances is enough to make one of M. Paul Bourget's fastidious heroines green with envy. We read of Etain, the Princess, washing her golden hair by the side of the fountain, in the fragrant dawn: "A clear comb of silver was held in her hand, the comb adorned with gold; and near her as for washing was a basin of silver whereon four birds had been chased, and there were little bright gems of carbuncle on the rims of the basin. A bright purple mantle waved around her; and beneath it was another mantle, ornamented with silver fringes: the outer mantle was clasped over her bosom with a golden brooch. A tunic she wore, with a long hood that might cover her head attached to it; it was stiff and glossy with green silk beneath red embroidery of gold, and was clasped over her breasts with

marvellously wrought clasps of silver and gold ; so that men saw the bright gold and the green silk flashing against the sun." [1]

We tire a little in time, we moderns, of these continual splendours, and would fain get away from the glittering palaces, and silk clad high-born ladies to learn how it fared with the ordinary men and women, the people like ourselves, in the Ireland of long ago. A thrill of rare interest and sympathy awakes in us when, as sometimes happens, we get a glimpse of life outside the great *dúns*. These glimpses, owing to what I have dared to call the snobbishness of the ancient Irish men of letters, are all too few ; but perhaps for that reason they are the more precious, and a diligent search through the old tales will be amply rewarded by the discovery of even one or two of them.

Curiously enough, it is in the story of Macha, a woman of semi-divine origin, that we get one of the most vivid and delightful pictures of old Irish country-life. The beginning of that fine tale, " The Debility of the Ultonian Warriors," is laid " on the heights and in the solitudes " of the Ulster hills, in the farmstead of Crundchu mac Agnoman. His wife had died leaving him a lonely widower. One day as he sat, sorrowful and brooding, there came into his house a young stately woman. " She sat herself down on a chair near the hearth, and stirred the fire. . . She fetched a kneading-trough and a sieve and began to prepare the food. As the day drew to an end she took a vessel and milked the cow. When she returned to the house, she turned right about, went into the kitchen and gave directions to his servants.: then she took a seat next to Crundchu. Each one went to his couch ; she remained to the last and put out the fire." There, we

[1] " The Wooing of Emer " (Miss Hull's version in the " Cuchullin Saga "), and " The Courtship of Etain" (version in Lecky's " Heroic Romances of Ireland ").

have, one feels, a perfect picture of the ordinary day of a well-to-do Irish farmer's wife centuries ago. For as such the unknown lady installed herself. Crundchu, like a wise man, recognised in all this energy and competence in matters domestic an ideal equipment for the mistress of a thriving, busy farm, and promptly married her. "For a long time they dwelt together. Through his union with her, he increased yet more in wealth. His blooming appearance was delightful to her." [1] Their idyllic happiness continued, until Crundchu's foolish boasting brought about the tragedy which involved not their fate alone, but that of all Ulster.

As fresh and fragrant as the dewy forest-dawn in which it is set there comes to us across the centuries, the story of King Cormac's wooing of Eithne, giving us an exquisite picture of an Irish country girl, and her occupations seventeen centuries ago. I take the tale from Keating, and in gratitude to him we must retract some of our reproaches.

Eithne was the foster daughter of Buicead, a farmer, who had ruined himself through excessive generosity and hospitality, and had fallen from vast wealth into deep poverty, so that of his unnumbered flocks and herds there remained but seven cows and a bull. "He fled by night with his wife and Eithne from Dun Buicead, to an oak grove near Ceannanus na Midhe, where Cormac used to reside; and Buicead built a bothy, in which himself and his wife and foster-child found shelter. And Eithne used to serve or wait upon her foster-father and her foster-mother as a maid servant.

"Now on a certain day Cormac rode forth alone through the lands around the town, and he saw the fair maiden, Eithne, milking these seven cows of Buicead. And this was her way of doing it: she had two vessels, and she

[1] Miss Hull's, "Cuchullin Saga," p. 97.

milked the first portion of each cow's milk into the first vessel, and the second portion into the second vessel, and she acted thus until she had milked the seven cows, while Cormac kept watching her. She then went into the hut in which her foster-father was, and left the milk there, and took out in her hand two other vessels and a cup to the stream which was near, and with the cup filled the first vessel from the water which was near the brink, and the second vessel from the water which was in the middle of the stream, and then she returned to the hut. She came out a third time, having a reaping-hook to cut rushes; and as she cut the rushes she used to put each long wisp of fresh rushes that she cut on one side, and the short rushes on the other. Now King Cormac [who had fallen in love with her at first sight] was watching her during each of these practices; and he asked her for whom she was making the special selection of the water, the milk, and the rushes. 'He, for whom I am making it,' said she, 'is worthy of a greater kindness from me, were it in my power to do it.' 'What is his name?' asked Cormac. 'Buicead the farmer,' she replied. 'Is that Buicead, the Leinster *biadhthach*, who is celebrated throughout Ireland?' asked Cormac. 'It is,' said she. 'Then,' said Cormac, 'thou art Eithne, daughter of Dunlaing, his foster-child?' 'I am,' replied Eithne. 'It is well,' said Cormac, 'for thou shalt be my wife.' 'It is not I who can dispose of myself,' said she, 'but my foster-father.' Upon this Cormac went with her to Buicead, and promised him gifts if he got Eithne as his wife. Buicead consented to give Eithne to Cormac as his wife; and Cormac gave him the district of Odhran beside Tara, with its stock of cattle, during his life." And thus Eithne became great Cormac's Queen, and the mother of an illustrious line of High Kings—and, what can have been no less delightful to her grateful heart, the instrument of her

foster-father's restoration to more than his former prosperity.[1]

If the pages of the romance writers, poets and chroniclers yield but a scanty harvest to our search for pictures of a countrywoman's life in ancient and mediaeval Ireland, the old Irish Lives of the Saints more than make up for their deficiencies. From the *Lives of the Saints* in the *Book of Lismore* alone it would be almost possible to reconstruct the details of our country ancestresses' work and occupations day by day—or at least season by season. In the tales of St. Patrick's boyhood we get glimpses of the hard life of the country folk in their poor little huts of wattle and clay, so insufficient a protection against the rigours and storm of the fierce winter time. One tale of his boyhood's miracles tells of a ' great flood and a fulness of water ' in his foster-mother's hut, and a quenched fire, and the household gear a-swim—and the sudden snapping of a poor woman's temper, when to crown all these misfortunes her hungry nursling sets up a howl for something to eat! Wonderfully true to life sounds to us her exasperated answer: " truly we have something to do before making food for thee, for not even the fire is alive." Other stories show a pitiful lack of firewood in the bitter nights of frost, and of hard tasks and hard impositions laid on the poor by the king, and of children early initiated into a life of toil. And yet this hard life is shown to be not without its compensations, and it is charming to find little boy saints being taken by their mothers (like many a little country child in Ireland to-day) to the milking-place every day to get a drink of foaming milk warm from the cow.[2]

In the tales of St. Brigid's girlhood in the same collection we are initiated into life as it must have been in

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[1] Keating's *Foras Feasa*, book i, sec. xliii.
[2] *Betha Patraic*, ll. 70, 80, 86, 95, 121, 127.

the "boolies," (as Spenser calls them) which were such an important feature of mediaeval Ireland's economic system. In the "View of the State of Ireland," Ireneus explains to Eudoxus the nature and origin of the "custom of boolying" and the extraordinary difficulties it put in the way of an English conquest of our land. It was the custom in mediaeval Ireland (as it still is in Switzerland and other countries) to drive the cattle to the hills for the summer, and the people who had care of the cattle went with them, building for themselves temporary huts either of timber, or wattles, or sods. Here the women made butter and stored it in great hampers to be salted, or wrapped it in cloths or closed it in casks to be buried in the bogs and thus preserved for the winter. The custom was based on very sound economics, as Eudoxus immediately grasped. "It is very behooveful," he points out, "in this country of Ireland, where there are great mountains and waste deserts of grass, that the same should be eaten down and nourish many thousands of cattle for the good of the whole realm, which cannot, methinks, well be any other way than by keeping these boolies there, as ye have showed." But in Spenser's eyes the system had the profound disadvantage of keeping the Irish people too well fed, too well provided with cattle, and nourishing a stout race of soldier sons whom no hardships or dangers could daunt—and therefore it was as obnoxious to "Ireneus" as a creamery of late to a Black and Tan!

It is into such a mountain dairy that we are led by the following tale from the *Betha Bhrighdi* in the *Book of Lismore*:[1]

"Afterwards Brigit went to visit her mother who was in bondage. Thus was her mother, in sickness before her, and she was at a mountain-dairy having twelve

[1] *Op. cit* l. 1266.

cows with her, and she collecting butter. Now the virgin served humbly after her mother, and began setting the dairy to rights. The churning that was made was divided into twelve portions in honour of the Lord's twelve apostles. And the thirteenth portion was set so that in honour of Christ it was greater than every (other) portion, and it was given to the poor and to the guests. For she used to say that Christ was in the person of every faithful guest. That seemed a marvel to the herd, and he went to converse with the druid [*i.e.* the master of Brigid's mother]. The druid and his wife asked: 'has the maiden cared well for the dairy?' . . Then they went to the dairy having with them a great hamper eighteen hands high to be filled with butter. Brigit made them welcome, and washed their feet, and gave them food. Then the druid's wife said to Brigit: 'we have come hither to know whether that which hath been entrusted to thee hath profited. Of butter what hast thou?'" Brigit, it turned out, had only a churning and a half of butter—but in reward for her faith and charity the hamper was miraculously filled and "if all the hampers of the men of Munster had been there she would have filled them all!"

Illustrations of a countrywoman's life in Ancient Ireland are also abundant in the *Lives* of St. Ciaran, and of St. Senan, but these have been already garnered into other pages of this book.[1]

The *Book of Lismore* was compiled in the fifteenth century, and therefore we cannot be sure whether the manners and customs mirrored in it are those of the fifth and sixth centuries, as they purport to be, or those contemporary with the book's production. Given, however, the remarkable conservativeness of Irish life the question is not a very important one, as doubtless the

[1]See "Mothers of the Saints of Erin."

change through all these centuries was not very great. This may seem a very strange assertion to make, but it is supported by evidence to the effect that nearly all the descriptions of Irish country life we possess, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, picture houses and food and clothing of a great similarity. And if there was little change in these later centuries, the inference is fair that there was little previously.

In Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, written in the seventh century, we know that the manners described are those of the actual period to which they are credited. We get many authentic glimpses in that wonderful book of the life of Irish (and Scottish) women in the sixth century, on the islands of the wild Northern seas, and in the lonely valleys and by the lake-shores amid the Northern hills. A hard life it was—such as touched the Saint's kind heart to quick and tender compassion. And so we find him, in scene after scene, working to relieve their misery; invoking a terrible punishment on the "savage cruel persecutor of the innocent" whom he saw pursuing a young girl on the plains of Leinster,[1] standing up in King Brude's own royal presence to denounce the powerful Druid Broichan for his keeping in captivity a poor little Irish maid,[2] taking compassion on the wife and little ones of the "very poor peasants" Nessan and Columban,[3] and of "the beggar man by the shore of the Aporic Lake,"[4] easing by his saintly prayers the pangs of the poor woman who "as a daughter of Eve suffered great and very hard throes of childbirth,"[5] turning the heart of the wife of Lugne, the Rathlin Pilot, so that her unconquerable aversion to her deformed husband, changed into tenderest love,[6] sending Brother Lugaid all the way from Iona to Clogher with a little pinewood box whose contents

[1] *Adamnan* ii, 25.
[2] *Ib.* ii, 33.
[3] *Ib.* ii. 20, 21.
[4] *Ib.* ii, 37.
[5] *Ib.* ii, 30.
[6] *Ib.* ii, 41.

were to cure Maugina's broken hip-bone,[1] curing with blessed salt the ophthalmia of the sister and nurse [2] of Colgu, and preserving her little cottage from the flames which laid the village in ruins.

We, too, feel compassion for these women when through the eyes of various travellers to Ireland in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we see the houses in which they had to live and the hard conditions under which they had to exist. But we must remember that it was, under God, owing to the hardships which our peasant ancestresses learned, from generation to generation, to endure that the persistence of the Irish race after seven and a half centuries of almost continuous war is due. You simply cannot knock out a race which can "strip itself to the fight" in the way the Irish have learned to do in the defensive wars which they have waged continuously since the first Norman freebooter set foot on Irish soil. In an unusual outburst of generosity Lloyd George during the "Great War" paid tribute to the German "war-bread spirit." That "war-bread" spirit has always been the spirit of the Irish countrywomen. They were content to live in the poorest kind of huts—"such cottages as themselves can make in three or four days," to eat only the very plainest food, to wear such clothes as could be produced by the labour of their own hands—these were the necessities of the situation if the defensive warfare was to be maintained—but they were *never* content to give up the fight, to acknowledge themselves the mothers and wives of a broken and defeated race! So the contemptuous descriptions given by foreigners of the "beastly manner of life and savage condition" of the Irish country people during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries need cause us no shame.

The most interesting description of Irish country life

[1] *Ib.* ii, 5, 7. [2] *Ib.* ii, 7.

in the seventeenth century—and of Irish country-women of that period is given by one Luke Gernon, who was appointed to a judgeship in Munster in 1619.[1] About a year after he took up the post he wrote to a friend of his in England giving a spirited description of the country and its people and this "Discourse of Ireland" lay long among the Stowe Papers at the British Museum and was first published by the late Mr. Litton Falkiner in his "Illustrations of Irish History." Here is how he describes an Irish village:

"The villages are distant each from other about two miles. In every village is a castle, and a church. The baser cottages are built of underwood, called wattle, and covered some with thatch and some with green sedge, of a round form and without chimneys, and to my imagination resemble so many hives of bees about a country farm. In the end of harvest the villages seem as big again as in the spring their corn being brought into their haggards, and laid up in round cocks in form of their houses."

This is what he has to say about Irish women:

"The women of Ireland are very comely creatures, tall slender and upright. Of complexion very fair and clear-skinned (but freckled) with tresses of bright yellow hair which they chain up in curious knots and devices. They are not strait laced nor plated in their youth but suffered to grow at liberty so that you shall hardly see one crooked or deformed. I never saw fairer wenches. Of nature they are very kind and tractable. . . They are not so reserved as the English yet very honest." (He pays tribute here to that traditional purity of Irish women, which we have always cherished as the chief jewel of our race.)

[1] "A Discourse of Ireland," published for the first time by the late C. Litton Falkiner in his "Illustrations of Irish History" from a MS. in the Stowe Papers in the British Museum.

"I come to their apparel. . . In the country even among their Irish habits they have sundry fashions. I will begin with the ornament of their heads. At Kilkenny they wear broad beaver hats coloured, edged with a gold lace and faced with velvet, with a broad gold hat band. At Waterford they wear caps, turned up with fur and laced with gold lace. At Limerick they wear rolls of linen, each roll containing twenty bandles of fine linen cloth (a bandle is half an ell), and made up in the form of a mitre. . . In Connacht they wear rolls in the form of a cheese. In Thomond they wear kerchiefs, hanging down to the middle of their back. The maids wear on the forepart of their head about four yards of coloured ribbon smoothly laid, and their own hair plaited behind. In other places they wear their hair loose and cast behind. They wear no bands, but the ornament of their necks is a carcanet of goldsmith's work beset with precious stones, some of them very rich, but most of them gaudy and made of painted glass, and at the end of them a crucifix. They wear also bracelets, and many rings. I proceed to their gowns. Lend me your imagination and I will cut it out as well as the tailor." He keeps his word and proceeds—if not to cut them out as well as the tailor—to describe them as minutely as a modern fashion editress "writing up" the gowns at a smart race-meeting. He tells us of their tight-fitting long waisted corslet bodices, the front lacing of which showed the smock in the case of poorer women, a silk scarf, worn like a vest, in the case of the richer. "On the forepart of these bodices they have a set of broad silver buttons of goldsmith's work set round about. They have hanging sleeves very narrow, but no arming sleeves, other than their smock sleeves, or a waistcoat of striped stuff, only they have a wristband of the same cloth, and a list of the same to join it to their wing, but nothing on the hinder part of the arm. The better sort have sleeves

of satin. The skirt is a piece of rare artifice. At every breadth of three fingers they sew it quite through with a welt, so that it seems so many bits put together. That they do for strength. They gird their gown with a silken girdle, the tassel whereof must hang down point blank before to the fringe of their petticoats. They begin to wear knit stockings coloured, but they have not disdained to wear stockings of raw white frieze, and brogues. They wear their mantles also as well within doors as without. Their mantles are commonly of a browny blue colour with fringe alike, but those that love to be gallant wear them of green, red, yellow and other light colours, with fringes diversified. An ordinary mantle is worth £4, those in the country which cannot go to the price wear white sheets mantlewise."

Gernon describes the food in "the baser cabbins" in somewhat unappetising terms: "you shall have no drink but *bonnyclaber*,[1] milk that is soured to the condition of buttermilk, nor no meat but *mullagham*,[2] a kind of chokedaw cheese, and blue butter, and no bread at your first coming in but if you stay half an hour you shall have a cake of meal unbolted and mingled with butter baken on an iron called a gridle, like a pudding cake." [3]

One thing is certain. On this Spartan fare of "bonnyclabber" and wholemeal griddle cakes these Irish countrywomen reared immense families of valiant soldier sons whose physical vigour and endurance were proverbial throughout Europe. Irish boys were marvellous athletes, and we have more than one foreigner testifying to the fact that their champion runners "in swiftness equal and even surpass the horses." No lung disease or heart disease there! Spenser's testimony to their soldier qualities is all the more valuable as it was that of such a

[1] Rectè, *bainne clabair*, i.e. thick sour milk.
[2] Rectè, *mulchán*, i.e. cheese made from buttermilk.
[3] *Loc. cit.* pp. 355–360.

convinced enemy of our race. They were, he tells us, "great endurers of cold, labour, hunger, and all hardiness [*i.e.* hardships], very active, and strong of hand, very vigilant and circumspect in their enterprises, very present in perils, very great scorners of death." The women who bore and reared such sons, if there were nothing else to their credit, have "deserved well of the *patria*."

But there is much else. Not only did they rear their own boys in this splendid Spartan fashion, but as foster-mothers, they gave to their aristocratic nurslings much of their own vigour. If space permitted one could draw many a striking portrait of the "foster-mothers" of our Irish heroes. Two of them in particular will occur at once to the memory, one the "nurse" of Morty Oge O'Sullivan, who made that marvellous "Dirge" [1] when she saw "the dear head of her darling" all gory and pale spiked high on the walls of Cork jail. His enemies had dragged him, tied to a boat, through the sea from Bearhaven (where they had wounded and captured him) to Cork, where they beheaded him:

"Had he died calmly
I would not deplore him;
Or if the wild strife
Of the sea-war closed o'er him.
But, with ropes round his white limbs
Thro' ocean to trail him,
Like a fish after slaughter
'Tis therefore I wail him!"

Another is the tragic figure painted by Spenser of the old woman, the foster-mother of Murrogh O'Brien, whom at the execution of her nursling at Limerick the poet saw "take up his head while he was quartered and suck

[1] It begins in O'Callaghan's fine translation:

"The Sun on Ivera
No longer shines brightly."

up all the blood that ran thereout, saying that the earth was not worthy to drink it, and therewith also steeped her face and breast and tore her hair, crying out and shrieking most terribly." "Savage and horrible" is the comment of a fastidious modern, re-calling the incident. Perhaps—but it is at least certain that the boys who were suckled at the breasts of such women could never be milksops. And so we begin to understand how the fight for freedom has gone on from generation to generation.

In that fight the countrywomen played an important part in another respect. They were tremendously hard working (even Spenser acknowledges that), and when their men had to go to the wars they took their place as "ploughers and husbandmen." So it came about that when Mountjoy's weapons of "famine and fortresses" were perfected, the women endured the hardest part of the fight. "Your honour must conceive," writes Sir Francis Shane to Sir Robert Cecil, "that as long as the Irish shall be suffered never so little tillage with their cows they will never quail." At the same time "dispersed garrisons" were kept busy "keeping the women and children from ploughing, so that they must the next year starve." And starve they did. There followed famine scenes so dreadful that the mere record of them makes the heart sick. What of the women who had to endure them themselves and see their children perish by the wayside of hunger? "It was a famous victory," that which Mountjoy had to report to "the Lords in England," his masters. By keeping the women from ploughing, and destroying the young corn he had brought Tir Eoghain to such a state of famine that "since our first drawing this year to Blackwater there were above three thousand starved." O'Hagan had protested that "between Tullagh Oge and Toome there lay unburied a thousand dead." "No spectacle," writes Fynes Moryson, "was more frequent in the ditches of towns, and especially in wasted

countries than to see multitudes of poor people dead with their mouths all coloured green by eating nettles, docks and all things they could rend up above ground."

Those women who lay dead there in the ditches starved to death by the policy of Elizabethan "English gentlemen" have left no name behind them. "To what graves their bodies are consigned," laments Philip O'Sullivan, "therein also are their fame and memory interred." But an age which sees the great ones of the earth gather in homage around the tomb of an "Unknown Warrior" will understand, perhaps, with what emotion we Irishwomen of to-day call up their memories. They, too, "strove and suffered for Eire," and died that she might live.

In the great fight whose issue was to keep Ireland true to the Catholic Faith these countrywomen played a remarkable part. Some record of what they achieved we owe to Philip O'Sullivan. He tells how when the schools were ruined, "the holy communities of friars for the most part scattered and banished," the mothers and nurses stepped into the gap, taught their children and nurslings the rudiments of the faith and made them so loyal to the Catholic Church that no persecution could overcome, no arguments weaken their attachment to it. "This is the reason why the herds and country people are more pure and enlightened in devotion to the Catholic faith than the Anglo-Irish who dwell in the royalist towns." [1]

Another scene from O'Sullivan [2] shows the country women championing the Faith in a more definitely militant manner. "In a certain village near the town of Drogheda dwelt an English minister, who greatly annoyed the Catholic priest of the village, and other Catholics: now endeavouring to seize the priest, anon complaining of his neighbours, and wanting to be present at marriages,

[1] Hist. Cath. p. 133.

[2] *Ib.* p. 135.

baptisms, funerals and other sacred rites. Once it happened that a certain neighbour died whose body the rest wished to bury, with the priest in attendance and unknown to the minister. The body was with the utmost privacy brought to the church, surrounded by women—the men were not present for fear of the English; the grave was just dug and the priest had begun to say the Holy Mass, with one boy answering. When the heretical minister, who had watched all night, discovered this he secretly and stealthily entered the church, and stood silently at the door until the Consecration was over. Then, however, seizing the priest by the collar, and also laying hold on the chalice and Sacrament, 'Give me,' said he, 'this chalice and also come with me yourself whom I arrest by the authority and command of the Queen.' Hereupon the women, rising up and quickly laying hands on the minister, threw him into the dug-out and open grave, and began to cover him with earth and stones. He cried out to stop, begging pardon and promising he would never again in the smallest way, molest a priest or any Catholic. When he had sworn to this, he was, at the bidding of the priest, let go by the women, and afterwards kept his oath, not annoying the villagers but becoming respected and beloved by them."

In the reports of the early Jesuit missions to Ireland we get many glimpses of Irish country women and their sturdy devotion to the Catholic Church. Fr. Holywood, S.J.,[1] relates amongst other interesting circumstances how, when the country women were about to become mothers, they would take long and toilsome journeys to far-away districts where they knew there was a missioner, sacrificing their own safety, and the comfort of having their kinswomen around in their woman's hour of bitter need, so that the newborn babe might be baptised by

[1] Fr. Hogan's "Distinguished Irishmen," p. 489.

a priest. When "priest-hunting" became an established profession this custom was noted by its experts, and by following these women a priest was often "tracked."

In an "Account of the Jesuit Missions in Ireland from 1641 to 1652," [1] we learn of the success that attended the efforts of the Fathers in the country places around Cork. "The people used to crowd in to the instruction from places five or six Irish miles distant—waiting all day for the catechetical instruction and Confession, with nothing to eat unless the people of the place invited them to break their fast, or they themselves had taken the precaution to bring some dry oatmeal with them to eat in the fields. They set great price on holy water, and some of them would bring rustic vessels in which to carry it home; others who had omitted so to provide themselves would dip the hem of their mantle into the holy water receptacle, squeeze it out when they would go home and so keep themselves supplied until the following Sunday, others again filled one of their shoes with it, and walked home with one foot bare. When our Catechist having heard confessions all day returned to the city in the evening, they could hardly be torn away from him, escorted him along the road, and when compelled to part from him called out with one voice begging for his blessing," and it was all hours of the night before they got back to their own homes.

In that masterly study of Ireland's Penal Days, prefixed to her "Mary Aikenhead," Mrs. Atkinson has paid noble tribute to the Irish country woman for all she has done to keep alive Irish Catholic ideals. She shows how in the farmer's house and the peasant's hut the same sweet and pure family life, the same chivalrous devotion to the Catholic faith, the same hospitality and charity, the same love of learning flourished as in the homes of the gentry.

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[1] *Spic. Oss.* ii. p. 49.

" The poor man's wife did not turn the weary and hungry from her door, she received the poor scholar with a motherly welcome ; she accustomed her children to think nothing of a run of two or three miles to the hedge-school. By precept and by example, she taught them fidelity to the faith, love for the old land, reverence for God's ministers, and respect for learning. The high moral tone pervading the social life of the humbler classes in Ireland, was at once the cause and consequence of the important position which the women maintained at the domestic hearth,[1] and of the beneficial sway which they exercised among their neighbours of the same degree. The circumstances of the time were favourable to the growth of their influence. . . The latter half of the eighteenth century being happily free from such famines which had laid waste the country during the previous two hundred years and were fated to re-appear at a later period, there was plenty of food for the people. The staff of life—the potato—was then in its prime as to quality and quantity. Each little holding produced a crop sufficient for the support of a numerous family, with a large surplus for the poultry that crowded round the door, and the pigs which even the poorest cottier reared ; while a paddock was reserved from tillage as pasture for the high-boned native cow, which formed an important item of the live-stock. In the farmer's family linen and woollen stuffs were spun, woven, knitted, bleached and dyed and made into wearing apparel by the women. A spinning-wheel was as necessary a part of the furniture as a pot for cooking the stirabout. The

[1] Spenser also noted the pre-eminence of the women in the Irish home. He traces the circumstance back to the " Old Spaniards " from whom he holds the Irish in part descended : " Also the women amongst the old Spaniards had the charge of all household affairs, both at home and abroad. . And so have the Irish women the trust and care of all things, both at home and in the field."
—(" View of the State of Ireland.")

amusement of the men was to sit by the fire in the winter evenings, or smoke their pipes at the door in summer, listening to the story-teller or the singer while their wives and daughters knitted or spun: all, young and old, being ready to break out into a dance the moment a piper or fiddler appeared on the scene. . . Thus it was that the Irish, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home,' . . . passed through the Penal Days and came forth in the end with a crushed and suffering body, truly, but with the living soul intact. . . And the women of Ireland—they, too, had their part in the work, and their share in the reward laid up for good and faithful servants. Like the daughters of Job: *there were not found in all the earth women so beautiful . . . and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.*"

The Women of the Cloisters

I. NUNS IN IRELAND DURING THE MIDDLE AGES

THE story of the Nuns in Ireland in the period between the coming of the Normans and the rise in England of that "heresy and new error . . . through pride, vain-glory, avarice and lust, and through many strange sciences," which historians less orthodox than Michael O'Clery and his comrades describe as the "Reformation," is involved in much obscurity. The last entry in the *Four Masters* dealing with the Abbesses of Kildare (whose succession can be traced in their pages, with but few gaps, all through the preceding six centuries from the death of St. Brigid) is the *obit* of Abbess Sadbh in the year 1171. Similarly the last Abbess of Clonbroney mentioned by them is Caillechdomhnaill whose *obit* is entered under date 1163. These dates, falling so closely with that of the arrival of the Norman freebooters, are significant enough. Henceforth the references to nuns in our Annals are extraordinarily rare. In the *Annals of Ulster* we find mention of Duibessa,

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Authorities : For I.—"The Annals of the Four Masters" and "Annals of Ulster" ; De Burgo's *Hibernia Dominicana* ; *Spicilegium Ossorience* I ; " Little's Materials for Hist. of Franciscan Province of Ireland."

For the Poor Clares.—Unpublished Documents in Archives of the Poor Clares, Galway, including Chronicle ascribed to Mother Bonaventure Browne, the third Abbess of that Convent ; extracts from Brussels State Archives compiled by Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M.

For the Dominicans.—De Burgo's *Hibernia Dominicana,* and Fr. Coleman's edition of O'Heyne.

For the Benedictines.—" The Irish Dames of Ypres," by Dom Patrick Nolan, O.S.B.

daughter of Ruairi O'Conor and wife of Cathal Mac Diarmuid, dying a nun in 1229 ; of " Ben-Midhe, daughter of MacManus, the nun " (caillech dubh) who died in 1382 ; of " Finemhain, daughter of MacThomas, a devout nun," who died in 1446. Both the *Four Masters* and the *Annals of Ulster* record the *obit* of Finola, daughter of Felim O'Conor, Abbess of Kilcreevanty near Tuam, under the year 1301. They tell us, too, of the death in 1528 of Finola, daughter of Conor na Srona O'Briain, and wife of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, who had been " twenty-two years in the habit of St. Francis " ere she was borne to her last resting place by her lord's side in the choir of the Franciscan Monastery of Donegal which he and she had founded in 1474.

These references, rare as they are, serve sufficiently to correct an error into which a casual reading of the *Annals* might lead us. There *were* nuns in Ireland in the Gaeltacht as well as the Galltacht all through the Middle Ages ; and the abrupt dropping, after the Norman Invasion, of all reference by the Annalists to the old foundations which go back to the time of St. Patrick, and St. Brigid, St. Ita, St. Attracta, St. Brendan, St. Fanchea, St. Darerca, etc., does not mean that the Galls suppressed them.

It would appear that what really happened was that the Galls *grabbed* them. In a list compiled by de Burgo[1] of thirty-six houses of Augustinian Canonesses existing in Ireland previous to the suppressions under Henry VIII we find many of the old foundations : Kildare, Cluain-Bronach, Druimcheo, Kil-Liadain, Armagh, Kilslevae, Ross-Oirthir, Ross-Benchuir, Cluain-Credhail, Kilchree, etc. The substitution in these houses of the Augustinian Canonesses for the native religious orders who had been identified with them from their foundation seems to

[1] The list is compiled from Ware, Harris, Allemand, etc. See *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 735.

indicate that the racial war between the Gall and the Gael which, as we know, was fought out no less fiercely in the ecclesiastical domain than in the secular,[1] raged in the convents of the nuns also, and resulted in the defeat of the Gaels. Once Kildare, Clonbroney, etc., became part of the *Galltacht* our native annalists ignore them.

This seems to be the hypothesis into which the facts fit most aptly ; but it is necessary to point out in criticism of it that some writers on Church history maintain that the Augustinian Canonesses, so far from being aliens, were of Irish origin and that from the order founded by St. Brigid in our land in the sixth century proceeded the Canonesses not only of all Ireland, but those of England and Belgium.

In addition to the old foundations going back to the old Irish saints, we find in de Burgo's list the following : St. Mary's, Dublin, Kilclehin, (Tipperary), Athy—all founded by Dermot Mac Morrogh Cavanagh ; Clonard in Meath, founded by O'Melaghlin, dynast of Meath, Termon-Fechin in Louth, founded by the MacMahons. These belong to the twelfth century, as does Limerick, founded by Donald O'Brien. The convents which follow are Norman foundations, and are monuments to the munificence of the Barnewalls, Butlers, Riddlesfords, etc. : Timolin-Beg, Graney, Killeigh, Odder, Lismullen, Moylagh.

Grace-Dieu, in Co. Dublin, was founded by Archbishop Comyn (A.D. 1190) and played a great part in the history of " the Pale." When the order for the suppression of

[1] It will be remembered that one of the provisions of the Statutes of Kilkenny forbade the admission " into any cathedral or collegiate church by provision, collation or presentation, or to any benefice of Holy Church amongst the English of the land " of any ' Irishman of the nation of the Irish." " Also it is ordained that no religious house situate amongst the English shall henceforth receive any Irishman to their profession " under penalty of having their temporalities seized by the King of England.

the religious houses went forth in 1539, the Lord Deputy, Lord Leonard Gray, and the Council made a special request that this convent together with the Abbeys of Connel, Kells and Jerpoint, should be spared. The reasons adduced were that they served the Deputy, and Councillors and those resorting to his Court instead of "inns"; and more important still they were "bright centres" for the upbringing of the youth of the *Galltacht*. "Also in them younge men and childer, both gentilmen childer and other, both of man kynd and women kind, be brought up *in vertue, lernyng and in the English tongue and behaviour*, to the great charges of the said houses; that is to say, the women kynd of the whole Englishrie of this land, for the more parte in the said Nunrie [*i.e.* Grace Dieu], and the man kynd in the other said houses."

It is worthy of note that this petition did not save Grace Dieu for the poor nuns who owned it. Its rich possessions went to the Barnewalls, and the "women-kynd of the Englishrie" had to seek somewhere else their upbringing "in vertue, lernyng and in the English tongue and behaviour."

Other orders of nuns mentioned by de Burgo as having possessed houses in mediaeval Ireland are the Benedictines, to whom he assigns Kilcreevanty, mentioned above, with its two "Cells," Inchmean (Co. Mayo), and Ardcarn, Co. Roscommon—and with less certainty, the convent of St. John the Baptist in Cork, founded by William de Barry in 1300. The Cistercian nuns are said to have possessed two convents: one in Down and the other in Derry.

It is, curiously enough, in connection with a daughter of this house of Barnewall, the beneficiaries of the confiscation of Grace Dieu, that we get one of those references to Irish nuns before the seventeenth century, whose rarity makes them so precious. We learn from Fr. Holing, S.J., how "Margaret Barnwall a virgin noble by birth,

but yet more noble by virtue, had dedicated her virginity to God, from her tenderest youth, and about the thirtieth year of her age had received the blessed veil from a certain Catholic bishop, *according to the old Irish custom*, and passed her life amidst honest and chaste women and devout virgins." Margaret, as we know from her subsequent story, was a fluent Irish speaker.[1]

The "chaste women and devout virgins" with whom Miss Barnewall lived may have been tertiaries of either of the two great mendicant orders then so widespread in Ireland, the Franciscans and Dominicans. About the same time as Margaret received her veil from the hands of the unnamed Catholic bishop we have proof that Irish ladies became Dominican tertiaries. De Burgo, in relating the moving story of Honoria de Burgo,[2] murdered by the Cromwellians in 1653, tells how this noble lady, in her fourteenth year, received from the hands of the Dominican Provincial, Fr. Thady Dunne, the habit of the Third Order called of St. Catherine of Siena, and that having erected a dwelling for herself beside the Church of the Dominican Convent of Burrishoole, she lived there, devoting herself to works of piety through the reigns of Elizabeth, James I and Charles I. At the time of her death she had another young tertiary in her company, Honoria Magaen, as well as an attendant.

There is evidence for the existence in Ireland during the period under discussion of a few convents of Dominican nuns and Poor Clares. De Burgo quotes an entry from the Register of the Master of the Dominicans referring to the appointment (in 1549) for the Irish Provinces of a Commissary having authority over "the convents, monasteries and persons *of both sexes*." He confesses, however, that in spite of diligent research he has been

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[1] *Spic. Oss.* I. p. 106, *et seq.*
[2] *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 572.

unable to locate any of these convents for nuns, except perhaps one at Drogheda (referred to in a document of the Master General Augustine Pipia, 1722), and another at Waterford.[1]

A manuscript preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, written at Ragusa by Friar Peter of Trau in A.D. 1385 enumerates among the houses of the Franciscan Order in Ireland "three monasteries of Saint Clare."[2] There is no indication of their location. But a tradition gathered up by Mooney and Wadding points to one of them as having been situated in Carrick-on-Suir, on the site afterwards occupied by the Earl of Ormond's castle; and another may have possibly existed in Ennis. In the "Wars of Turlough" we read: "The following were the three fruit-walled, permanent and magnificent edifices of the courteous King Torlagh, viz., the delightful, illustrious and magnificent edifice of his hospitality celebrated after his death by the bards and historians of Eire; the second was the variegated and fish-streaming, the sumptuous and beautiful fabrick of the Abbey of Ennis on Laoigh, which he filled with religious orders of Friars and Nuns and supplied with sweet bells, holy crucifixes, a good library [or splendour of books] embroidery, glass windows, veils and cowls—that blessed habitation which he built for his own interment will last for ever after him with splendour. Torlagh's third and constant place of residence is the glorious, the never dark, the sanctified place of Heaven."[3]

These short notices practically exhaust all that is known for the moment of the nuns in Ireland between the twelfth and the end of the sixteenth century. On the other hand the materials for their history during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are abundant and extraordinarily

[1] *Hibernia Dominicana*, p. 348.
[2] Quoted in Little's "Materials," p. 163.
[3] *Ib.*, p. 81.

interesting. The story of the Irish nuns during the Penal Days is one of the most vivid chapters in our history.

Pride of place belongs to the Poor Clares, whose historic community in Galway represents the oldest existing foundation in Ireland. I am indebted to Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., for the materials for the following sketch of their history:

II. THE POOR CLARES

In the year 1620 a twenty-one year old Wexford lady, a daughter of the noble house of Cheevers, made her Profession in the Monastery of the English Poor Clares at Gravelines and received the name of Sister Martha Mariana. She was joined a little later by two other young Irish girls of noble birth, daughters of Theobald Viscount Dillon of Costello. Of these, Eleanor (in religion, Sister Mary of St. Joseph) was twenty-one on the day of her Profession (September 8, 1622), and her sister, called in religion Sister Cicely of St. Francis, was only nineteen. Three years later (May 6, 1625) these three Irish nuns had the joy of assisting at the holy Profession of two other compatriots, young and nobly born like themselves: Alse Nugent, called in religion Sister Magdalen of St. Clare, aged twenty-four, and Mary Dowdall, a Dublin girl aged nineteen, who took in religion the name Sister Mary Peter.[1]

A fortnight after the Professions of the last recruits (May 20, 1622) the five Irish nuns (Sister Mary Joseph Dillon being Superior) set out for Dunkirk, where with

[1] Particulars derived from the Register of the Poor Clares of Gravelines. This Register is in the possession of the Ursuline Nuns at Gravelines, who now occupy what was formerly the Convent of the English Poor Clares. The copy was made by one of the Poor Clares of the Convent at Darlington, and communicated to the nuns at Harold's Cross.

the gracious permission of that good friend of Ireland, the Archduchess Clara Isabella Eugenia, a house had been procured for them, and where it was hoped that a refuge had been assured to any Irish girl with a religious vocation. The Archduchess's authorisation is dated August 19, 1625.

Dunkirk, it would appear, did not prove a very suitable place of residence. In November, 1626, we find the "Irish Sisters" appealing through their agent, Jan der Walle, to the Secretary of the Archduchess for leave to move the foundation to Nieuport. The reasons adduced for the petition are sufficiently practical. They could get a suitable house at Nieuport for about a quarter of the rent they were obliged to pay at Dunkirk, and as for fish, the chief item in their dietary, they could buy more of it for a penny in Nieuport than for ten in Dunkirk. The reasons were held good (and were doubtless none the less convincing for that these Irish Poor Clares cost nothing to their Belgian hosts, being supported by their friends in Ireland), and early in 1627 the nuns moved to Nieuport. A passport dated June 5, 1627, gives leave to Fr. Robert Rochefort, an Irish Franciscan of Louvain, to pass freely between Belgium and Ireland and England on the sisters' business.

The Sisters remained about two years in Nieuport, where they received two new sisters: Sister Mary Power and Sister Brigid Antony Eustace. In 1629 they returned to Ireland and established themselves in Dublin.

From this point their story will be best told by one who knew intimately each member of this heroic little band, of whose company she was to be made free some four years later. An old manuscript of Mother Mary Bonaventure Browne's narrative lies on my table as I write these words, and it is impossible to resist a stirring of reverential awe, quickened with romance as one copies the message written in Spain so many centuries ago, and

so wonderfully preserved. She who tells us of these things lived in Bethlehem with Mother Cicely Francis and Sister Martha Mariana; she saw Brother Michael O'Clery and Duald MacFirbis in the flesh; she took part in the first foundation in Galway; she lived through the days of splendour and woe of the Confederation, and kissed the ring of Rinuccini when the Papal Nuncio visited her convent. She suffered the unspeakable miseries that were all Ireland's portion under Cromwell, and went into exile "for Christ's sake" when this proved the only way to remain faithful to her vocation. As one fingers this precious manuscript it is as if time had rolled backwards three hundred years and we were living again in the Ireland of the seventeenth century.

"Soon after they [*i.e.*, the seven Irish Poor Clares from Nieuport] had encloistered themselves in the Citty of Dublin and admitted twelve others to their forme of life, their persecution began by scares and threatenings in such manner as it was needful for them sometimes to hide themselves and to send their ornaments to be kept to some catholicke houses, yett not withstanding the sweet savour of their virtues extended it selfe, and the manner of their life was much admired, and the more that because by peoples memory there were none cloistered in that kingdome, and soe everybody was desirous to see and heare them. Amongst the rest the Lady Deputy [1] went disguised to looke on them, the which she did through the high grate, as they were in divine office, also behoulding their grate, Turne and Chaple was in admiration. And as she returned home said before ye Deputy and Peers(?) that if priests and fryers were persecutted for preaching and instructing the people that ye manner of life of them nuns was a more forcible motive to withdraw them than any preaching, uppon which ye

[1] She was Lady Falkland, who became a Catholic.

Lord Deputy sent ye Mayor with armed men to ye Convent, ordaining to bring the Abbesse with some of ye Religious to his presence, and to leave a guard upon ye Convent, and the rest, till further orders. The Mayor did soe, and as he passed the streets with those mild lambes, there assembled great concourse of people, who took compassion to see them going abroad barefoot, and feared much they should suffer greater harme, they raised such tumult as ye Mayor feared to be stoned, whereuppon directing his speech to Sir Luke Dillon, brother to ye Abbesse, Sister Cicely ffrancis, and some other Lords, Knights and Gentlemen, (kinsmen to ye nuns) who were present there, and said that no hurt should be done to ye Gentlewomen, and therefore for God's love to appease the people. They did so by persuasions of ye same Abbesse and other sisters. Having arrived at ye Castle where ye Deputy and Peers with a great multitude of people expected them, the Deputy questioned ye Abbesse, how did they dare to put up their grates, and settle themselves in cloister there before ye State. She was soe prudent and wise, that with her discreet answers, she convinced him, and moved both him with all that were present to compassion, so as notwithstanding that in ye beginning he commanded her with her virgins to leave ye Contry altogether, afterwards he contented himself only to banish them of ye Citty, giving them a month's space to prepare themselves, and seeing them barefoot after that manner, begged pardon, and sent a coach with them to their convent. His wife and other Ladyes that accompanied her there, used them with great kindnesse, and offered them a banquet or colation, craveing them to take their refection in their company. The Abbesse thanked them kindly and begged their pardon, saying they would eate nothing till they had gone home where ye rest of their sisters were!

"At the end of the above prefixed time, those young

and tender virgins parted that Citty, being not much above two years therein, and six of those who they admitted to ye habitt, being not then professed, or obliged by vow, unto that perfect state of life, yet notwithstanding that the Novices were Natives of ye same Citty, and bordering villages thereabouts, none of them would tarry with their parents, but contemning (as ye professed did) their sumptuous houses and dainty tables, went for the great love of God, with the rest to a remote country village, to live in great austerity amongst unknown people."

The place selected for their retreat was near Athlone—"a solitary necke of land without inhabitants near a great lake called Loughrie."[1] In 1633 Sister Mary Bonaventure and her sister, Catherine Bernard, two Galway girls of the Brown family, were professed in the Monastery which was erected on this promontory (and which in accordance with a custom usual enough with religious of that epoch was called Bethlehem), and so it happens that in describing the life there Sister Bonaventure speaks as a witness at first hand.

The place itself was like one of the "loca" of the early Franciscans, and around Sister Bonaventure's reminiscences of her happy years in Bethlehem there lingers something of that atmosphere of mingled poetry and austerity which makes the *Fioretti* or Celano's "Life of St. Clare" so exquisite. The situation was on "such a low and shadowed bog that the phisitians wonder how such tender creatures (very delicately bred) could live therein; for in wet and rainy weather the rain would not only fall over them through the roofe of the house, but also in severall places come upp under the ground; besides that all their houses were so low that their cells and all

[1] It was situated on the property of Viscount Dillon, Mother Cicely's father.—*Spic. Oss.* i, p. 250

other rooms (except only the quire) were upon the ground."

Their numbers rapidly increased to sixty, and with increase of numbers came no relaxation in their pursuit of perfection. Then " might be seen ye golden age in many religious meanly apparelled who employed themselves in the lowest offices and eat ye grossest meates although they were choice and noble persons in the world, none of them excused to labour, as in drawing of turf and wood with things necessary to the building of their house (when they were thrown into the grate) as also to brue, bake, wash dishes, serve in ye kitchen and the like. They prayed continually for while they laboured by their hands they used to be many times saying some kind of prayers in common, answering one another therein quire-wise. They observed such silence that mid-day seemed mid-night ; they had mutual charity to help and comfort one another, raised continually at midnight to say Mattins, and never eat flesh nor wore socks, or stokins, but contented themselves with wooden soles or patens under their feet having a list nailed about them to hold them on, and observed all other things ordained by the first rule of St. Clare with the stright statutes made by St. Colette upon said rule."

The fame of their sanctified life drew many visitors from far and wide. From Dublin all the way—and in those days of bad roads and primitive travelling facilities a journey of sixty-six miles *was* a journey—came no less a personage than Lord Deputy Wentworth's Lady, accompanied by the Duchess of Buckingham and many ladies of the viceregal court. They told the nuns how those who had persecuted them in Dublin never prospered afterwards. Many girls from all parts of Ireland were anxious to join the community, but were prevented by the great distance. To meet their needs a foundation was made in Drogheda during the provincialship of Fr. John

Barnewall, "seventeen very perfect nuns" being sent from Bethlehem to start the work. It would appear that there was already in Drogheda "a famous house" of the Third Order—from which proceeded all the other "Third Order" houses throughout the kingdom. When the tertiaries of Drogheda "encloistered themselves" after the model of the nuns of Bethlehem, their example was followed by their sisters in Kilkenny, New Ross, Wexford, Waterford and Limerick.[1]

A visitor to Bethlehem whose name stirs us more than that of any "Ladye Deputy" or Duchess came to the Monastery in 1636 and left a permanent memorial of himself there. Brother Michael O'Clery, almost straight from the completion of his enormous labours on the *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland*,[2] was in Bethlehem in October, 1636, and in collaboration with Fr. Aodh O Raghailligh and Fr. Seumas O Siaghail made for the use of the sisters a translation into Irish of the First Rule of St. Clare, and the Bull of Approbation of Innocent IV. Many of the nuns must therefore have been Irish speakers, and we learn of Sister Bonaventure herself that she was "prudent, wise and well-spoken in English, Irish and Spanish." At a later date (1647) when she was in Galway, Duald MacFirbis, then living in the College there, translated into Irish the Blessing of St. Clare, the Constitutions of St. Collette, and various other items concerning the Rule.[3]

The happy life described by Sister Bonaventure lasted until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1641. Then dark and evil days came upon Mother Cicely's flock. Its

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[1] In the list of Confessors appointed at the Middle Chapter held in Kilconnell in 1645 these houses of "Nuns of the Third Order" are enumerated.

[2] The "Annals of the Four Masters" were completed on August 10, 1636.

[3] MS. in Royal Irish Academy D.I. 2.

lonely, unprotected position exposed Bethlehem in a particular way to the attacks of the "Black and Tans"[1] of the period. The Galway people who had relatives in the Convent grew so much alarmed about them that they determined to found a monastery for them in their home city. The authorisation of the Provincial Fr. Anthony MacGeoghagan (afterwards Bishop of Clonmacnoise) was obtained for the foundation, and in 1642 Mother Mary Gabriel (*née* Nell Martin) went there as Mother Abbess accompanied by eleven sisters and two novices. Among the eleven we note, in Fr. MacGeoghagan's letter, the names of Sister Mary Bonaventure and her sister, Catherine Bernard.

When the "doleful tidings" reached that "poor flock" of Bethlehem that their beloved retreat was to be destroyed "they were surprised with great fear and horrour, not knowing where to seeke for help, nor from whom to hope for delivery from soe eminent a perill, but onely from God, by ye merits of their most holy Mother Sainct Clare, having strong confidence that Christ our Lord would then accomplish his former related promise, made unto her when he drive the Moores from her convent, and therefore sett up in quire a picture of hers, in which this miracle was painted, to be still praying before it, in presence of ye most Blessed Sacrament of ye Altar, which ye observers of St. Clare's first rule accustome to have within the quire, in a pix sett within a tabernacle, placed over ye high grate in such manner as on ye outside it might be discovered by drawing a string hanging downwards out of it, and on ye outside the fathers might without

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[1] "His Lordship (Lord Ranelagh) being importuned by Sir Charles Coote, myselfe and the field officers, to attempt some considerable service, his Lordship replied that the men sent unto him were *rouges* (rogues) *and goale-birds* out of England."—(Sir Michael Earnely's "Briefe Relation," quoted in Gilbert's "History of Confederation," vol. ii, p. 134.)

entering into ye Convent renew ye Sacred Host through a window which such tabernacles as are made for that use, hath on the outside, and ye key of ye said window is always kept by the confessor of ye Convent with great veneration.

"It can be hardly expressed with what fervour and devotion those sacred virgins prayed then to God to deliver them from that perill especially that they should never loose the pretious jewell of their virginity, which would grieve them more than any kind of death that could be invented; for which respect almost all their time both day and night was spent in prayer, and to the end that never an houre throughout the four and twenty might passe without haveing some of them watching still in prayer, the Abbess ordained that all ye community should by two and two, and sometimes by four and four in every hour keepe their turns in prayer before ye most Blessed Sacrament, and when ye hour glass should pass one of such as were in prayer to goe and give notice to those whose turn it was to come, to which they promptly came, whether it were by night or day. And after that manner they spent some months there, in such panic as it were far easier for them to suffer death at once than to live in the like prolonged martyrdom. Notwithstanding they continued with incredible constancy, pouring forth from their vexed hearts sweet lamentations replenished with confidence in their beloved Spouse Jesus Christ, often repeating how they had abandoned all for His love, and retired to that solitude and could not use materiall weapons to defend themselves, and therefore craved His Majesty of His mercy to deliver them."

The poor nuns left in Bethlehem after the departure of their sisters for Galway stayed on yet a few weeks, "not having a convenient place wherein to settle themselves." But "at last they were warned that the heretickes were in their way towards the Convent, and soe they fled

away in boates to ye other side of ye lake. The mercylesse heretickes seeing themselves frustrated of their malignant intent entered into ye convent, and stayed therein for ye space of three days and three nights, devouring all the provisions of ye poore sisters, and making their sport and laughter of the Altars, pictures, ornaments and sacred things which were therein ; some of them would put on ye habitts of ye nuns they found there, and jesting at them would say ' come, lett us goe say Masse and you to serve us.' Lastly set fire to ye Convent and burned it with all that was therein, onely that God preserved miraculously the tabernacle in which the Most Blessed Sacrament was used to be kept in the quire and wherein the said Holy Sacrament was when they prayed before it with the aforesaid fervour to be delivered from their enemies and likewise an old image of our Blessed Lady both made of wood." [1]

The desecrators of the holy places soon met with " a condigne recompense " which the gentle sister relates with unconcealed satisfaction : " For even as they were marching back they were all surprised and killed (being in number 120) by a party of ye Irish Catholicks, who to revenge such enormous a crime and publicke affront done to the Spouses of Christ, gathered from the boardering villages and fell uppon them in the highway like fierce lyons soe that none of said number escaped their hands but only one who fleed to Athlone, and ye ensuing night being possest with an infernal fury stabbed himselfe with his own dagger and soe went to accompany his fellow shouldiers to hell. . . Not onely those armed men went out to revenge that wicked fact, but even ye very labourors and pasturors of ye field with their clubs and shovells, and that a cow-herd would slash a trooper in ye back

[1] These precious relics are still preserved in the monastery of the Poor Clares, Galway.

with his batt and fell him downe from his horse and leave him there for dead. And one of them that fleed into a house of a village in the way and hid himself in a Hutch where corn was used to be kept; his enemies followed him, and after searching all ye house and not finding him, were going away, but it chanced (because it was God's will that none of them should escape) that the belt of his sword remained out of ye hutch; whereat they ran towards the place where he was, and opening the hutch did take him out by ye haire, and as ye half of his body was out of it, they layed ye table over him and cutt of his head; this was the end of that infernall people being a just and due hire to such cruell and impious insendaryes. And it happened in ye year 1642 being eight months after the war begun."

The homeless community scattered itself among the Catholic gentry of the neighbourhood, until provision could be made for the future. At length a refuge was found in Wexford for some of the nuns under Sister Martha Mariana Cheevers (who, it will be remembered, was a native of that city); and the Convent then founded in Wexford followed "the same stright rule, and observance which they had in Bethlehem, although Sister Martha dyed a few yeares after, having before renounced ye office of President shee held, and procured the ellection of another Abbesse over ye Religious. And upwards of three yeares after her death, her grave oppened of itselfe, being the summer before Cromwell took Wexford. . . Severall of ye fryers of ye monastery in which shee was buried sawe it, amongst the rest three of ye seaven ffranciscans martyred then by Cromwell, whose names were Fr. Hanmon Stafford, Brother Didacus Chivers, and Bro. James Rochford, who affirmed that her body was as white and fresh as when shee was buried, only that her hands were as if they had been anointed with oyle. The said holy laybrothers kissing them often

made up the grave before ye people entered the church : And the holy martire father Hanmon said it prognosticated some great tribulation that was to come, the which came to passe very soone."

The remainder of the Bethlehem community established itself in Athlone " not daring during that warrful time to live in such a solitary place as Bethlehem was, where there was neither force nor inhabitants to defend them." About the same time Drogheda having come into the hands of the English, the nuns there removed to Waterford. In 1647–1648 a foundation was made in Loughrea from Galway—and these five convents : Athlone, Galway, Wexford, Waterford, and Loughrea " prospered both in virtue and number " until the calamity prognosticated by the wonder of Mother Martha's open grave materialised and Cromwell came to put an end to all things with fire and sword and pestilence.

For a time the nuns driven out of their convents found shelter with their relatives ; but at length considering " how dangerous it was for them to live out of cloister among seculars . . . as many of them as could gett means for it left their parents, friends and native soyle and undertook ye perill and toyle to travele by sea and land . . to seeke a shelter in strange countryes wherein they might enjoy ye sweet imbracements of their celestiall spouse after which they were laungishing."

Mother Bonaventure then proceeds to tell us of many of the Irish Poor Clares " who in this persecution and banishment dyed in great renoune and estimation, after suffering incredible miseries, necessityes toyle and trouble." As we read her words it seems to us that from their Spanish graves the appealing figures of these long forgotten Irish ladies arise, and stretch out their hands to us begging " to be remembered in Erin." Shall we not hearken to their pleading and gather their memories once more into the storehouse of our dearest national treasures ?

III. OF SOME IRISH POOR CLARES WHO DIED IN SPAIN

"In Spain," writes Mother Bonaventure, "as many of them as went were charitably and honourably entertained and divided into convents, where they were maintained by a yearly annuity which ye Catholick King Philip IV paid for each one of them as continues to this day for such of them as are alive. First of all there dyed in Spain, Mother Cicely Francis [Dillon], then Abbesse of Athlone, and one of ye first foundresses of our order in Ireland, a woman endowed with such prudence, rare virtues and discretion that shee was five times elected Abbess; and Sister Margarett Evangelist [Moore] endowed also with the aforesaid vertues, and good qualities, and was once Abbess of ye Convent of Bethlehem. And about the very same time dyed Sister Cicely Joseph [Burke]. Those three happy souls with four more of their convent (all nieces to the said Mother Cicely [1]) having heard that such of their profession as should come to Spaine would be accomodated in convents, their ardent desire thereof forced them in such manner, as having noe other way to pass the sea, but a ship laden with souldiers, among which was many of their coussins and friends ecclesiasticall and secular that came in banishment and very ill accomodated of all necessaryes. In this ship they imbarked themselves by which these tender virgins indured much toile necessity and sicknesse and withall after ye shipp's

[1] The family to which Mother Cicely Francis Dillon belonged was exceedingly "long" and exceedingly pious. Sir Tibbot, her father (afterwards Viscount Dillon of Costello Gallene) had eight sons and eleven daughters. Two of his sons became Franciscans, one of them, Fr. Edward Dillon, being particularly well known and esteemed. His eighth and ninth daughters became the Mothers Mary Joseph and Cicely Francis of this narrative. In 1640 no fewer than eighteen of their nieces and nephews belonged to the Church. It was narrated of Sir Tibbot that before his death he saw more than one hundred of his descendants assembled in his house at Killenfaghey.

arrival at Galicia there was order given that none should come to land for many days for fear of the plague which at that season was in Ireland, soe as the venerable Mother Cisly, who was very weake and sickely by the aforesaid toile, dyed in the ship before the said dayes were expired to the great griefe of many, for the great want of all ye Irish nuns of her order had of her, for whose reducing together she undertook that journey; her body was buried with honourable obsequies and within few months after, dyed the said Sister Margarett Evangelist and Sister Cicely Joseph, of an infirmity they took in that toylesome journey being in ye yeare 1653.

"The next yeare after died in Madrid Sister Catherine Bernard [Browne] Abbesse of Galway [1] who with ye aforesaid fervour and anxietie came accompanied with other religious of her convent to seek to comply with their obligations; her body remains still uncorrupted in ye convent of discalceat nuns of ye Immaculate Conception of our B. Lady vulgarly called Cavellero de Gracia, and God by her meritts wrought miracles as in her life written by her own confessor, the Revd. Father James O'Neill of ye order of our holy father S. Francis may be seene. Many years after shee dyed in the said convent of Cavellero de Gracia Sister Margarett Clare [Jonyne] of ye same convent of Gallway, who was soe devout and constant in ye virtue of prayer and devotion, especially in saying ye beades of our blessed Lady that she received particular favours therein from God, and after her death the community avouched, that next after complying with the holy obedience they never found her but ordinarily in crosse, saying her prayers on her knees with her arms

[1] She was sister of Mother Mary Bonaventure and fourth Abbess of the Convent of Galway, having succeeded her sister who was third Abbess. Their father was Andrew Browne who appears in the lists of Aldermen for Galway in 1638–1641. The sisters were professed in Bethlehem in 1633.

acrosse.[1] And this custom of having her arms in crosse was such that as shee was agonizing and speechelesse, she would be stretching them out in crosse. And such was the estimation had of her good life that soe soone as shee yielded her soule to her creator, the Abbesse caused all ye beades, medalls and other things of devotion, that shee carried about her to be brought unto herselfe, to be distributed betwixt severall persons who with great devotion begged it as a relique. And because there was not enough for soe many as came to aske some thing of hers, her beades and comandulas were given stone by stone. Her death was in ye yeare 1669 on ye 15 of January according to ye Spanish calendar. And upwards of six months before her there reposed in our Lord in St. Clara of Bilbao uppon Sainct John Baptist's day another Nun of the said convent of Gallway called Sister Catherine Francis Browne, who before and after shee became a nun was of a very austere and rigorous life, accompanyed with fervent prayer and many other vertues, with which shee was indowed especially ardent charity together with great zeal of Religious observance, for which she suffered much in this life. All which meritted that she left behind her a sweet odour of vertue and renoune of good life. . .

"In the Convent of ye Immaculate Conception of Magueda(?) died two other young yett very perfect sisters of this convent of Gallway, the one called Sister Elizabeth Baptist [Lynch], of whom her confessor testified that in his life he never treated with a purer soul than hers. And some years after her death as another was burying nerby her, some of her grave was discovered (and) her body was seene fresh and white. . . The other was called Sister Clara Colet Christian Blake who dyed during ye

[1] That is with her arms outstretched. It recalls the manner of praying of the old Irish saints.

year of her probation and yett at her own earnest request the Provinciall licenced to professe her that she might have the great merit thereof. Soe shee professed the first rule of St. Clare though the convent wherein she dyed was of a different order (for severall of ye banished Irish Clares did of necessity enter into convents not of their own constitutions as that of Cavellero de Gracia and others).

"Since her childhood she was of an exemplar life and had a vocation to religion which was soe fervent that it made her forsake her parents, country and friends (attending ye Psalmist: vidt., heare daughter and see and incline thine eare, and forget thy people and the house of thy father, etc.) and to associate herself to a company of some nuns of ye convent of Galway that came to Spain, to comply with their profession of monastical life. Such as were present at her death judged that she knew the hour thereof, for her profession which with much annexetie she desired was proferred her the morning of the day she dyed but she said it was not then necessary and in the evening she begged it most humbly saying it was time. And after professing most devoutly and receiving the last sacraments. After her death her body became soe beautifull as it demonstrated the glory her soule enjoyed in heaven and for admiration to see the like beauty in a dead carkas many came to ye quire grate to look on it. As the blessed Novice layed in her death bed at Magla a holy nun of the convent of Cavellero de Gracia in Madrid called Sister Cate Evangelist who lived and dyed in renoune of a holy life, told a remarkable thing of her, and although she kept secret always God's favours towards her yett moved to compassion by seeing a cousin of ye said novice much greived that she was dying; to comfort her she told her that as the novice passed Madrid at her going to Magla she recommended much unto her to pray seriously that she might attaine to professe

ye rule of Sainct Clare, and that she did soe. But (said she) as I was praying few days a goe, I saw her harby me upon her knees with a sweet and bashfull countenance and her eyes fixed on ye ground craving me to pray that she might be professed. A few days after this good religious told this, there came news both of the death and profession of the novice as is above specified ; she with ye said Sister, Elizabeth, are buryed in the quire of that abbey and held in great veneration. . .

" But before I undertooke to write in this booke what is recounted therein of the deceased Irish nuns I wrote to ye convents in which they dyed, and to ye other persons of creditt, craveing their letters of certification thereof the which letters I keepe still in my custody.

" The last of this convent of Gallway who dyed in Spaine was Sister Julian Anthony Blake native of ye towne of Gallway, as the formers alsoe were. She dyed in ye Royall Convent of St. Clare of Orduna when by marvellous signes God manifested how pleasing her soule was unto Him, as on a relation which ye Abbesse of that convent writ of her death may be seene, out of which I will recount a little. One thing is that being always very backward in speaking the Spanish language some days before her death shee spoake it as eloquently as if she had been native of ye same country ; by which (not having an Irish confessour) she could without any difficulties expresse her conscience with whatsoever else shee pleased in Spanish ; and was soe jocond and glad to be dying that shee caused to play upon a harp for her and together therewith to sing *Te Deum Laudamus*, at which ye Community tooke such delight that each one said interiously what sweetnesse is this wee feele, it is to be in Glory or assisting a good death. The day before she dyed she craved before it was time, to sing sometimes the creed for her herself saying with great alacrity *Deo gratias* ; and approaching neere unto death she spoake

out vigorously two or three times saying even as if somebody were contradicting her : ' I believe all,' and making a signe to ye Confessor to give her the last absolution which to him seemed not then time, but shee knew the instant thereof for presently she became senceless and soe rendered her happy soul to God with such peace and tranquillity as if it were smilling that it could not be perceived a while after whether she was dead or alive. Many other things are related of her but it is not fitt to inlarge them in this place soe I will conclude by saying that always she used great austerityes and in 14 months before she dyed she never tooke off her cloathes if it were not to change tunicke, nor entered into a bed howsoever cold or hot the weder were but passed all the nights in the quire and felt hunger always because she would never eate what would satisfie it.

" In the convent of ye Discalseats of our holy mother St. Clare of Vallodolid passed happily to her Creator Sister Apollonia Connor of ye Convent of Loughreagh who meritted to see our B. Lady coming to comfort her in her death bed. . .

" In the convent of the Discalseats Franciscans of Salamanca of the order of Sainct Clare deceased Sister Clare Maria of ye convent of Wexford who attained to such perfection that she knew her death a yeare before it and was all that time preparing herselfe thereunto with extraordinary devotion, never slept more than 3 hours a night and from Mattins forth remained in prayer ; she tooke discipline with such force as she would shake ye place about her and leave her body black and blew ; she was indowed with many vertues as to such as would most revile her would show herself more affable. The Abbesse commanded her as shee was dying to come and comfort an Aunt of hers that was in that convent much grieved for her death, and the night ensueing she came to her said Aunt in a dream with a cheereful

countenance, her hands joyned and her eyes lifted up to heaven and told her that by the meritts of our B. Lady who did much for her at the houre of her death, she was saved and deseired her not to be afflicted but to resigne her will to that of God, and soe kisseing her 3 times did vanish leaveing her Aunt comforted though for three dayes after she felt cold in her lipps, from the kissing, by which she judged that the deceased was not then in glory though neere to come to it.

"In the Urbanists of Salamanca dyed a nun of our nation called Margarett FitzLaurence in renoune of good life, who tooke the habit in the same convent.

"And in Madrid in the above mentioned convent of Cavellero de Gracia dyed very happily another of that convent of Waterford called Sister Mary Agustin in which replenished the virtue of charity. Shee declared as shee was dyeing that the divell was exciting her to vaineglory for leaving her country, parents and freinds, to come to comply with her obligations of a monasticall life, for the overcoming whereof she craved the prayers of and assistance of her confessor, with the Religious women that were present wherewith shee overcame the Hellish fiend and rested in our Lord."

At the time Mother Bonaventure's record was written many of the dispersed nuns were still alive, and she prudently refrains from saying more of them than that they were "held in good estimation" in the convents which had received them—"for before death none is to be praised." But she cannot refrain from paying a tribute to the perfection with which the "Rule of Sainct Clare with the stright statuts made on it by our mother Sainct Colet" had been observed in the Irish convents: "And there are yett alive many grave fathers of ye observance worthy of creditt who can certify this to be true whereas some of them were Provincialls, others Visitors and others confessors to the said Convents. And

I myselfe (although an unworthy sinner) can wittnesse it for I inhabitted many years in the convent of Bethlehem and after ye destroying thereof in the convent of Galway. I doe also verifie during my banishment here in Spaine I have seene several convents in some of which I lodged some nights and heard true relation of many, and withall dwells these many years in one of the most Renowned, and in effect of the more observantest of the Country, and in which God preserves still holy persons. Notwithstanding none of those Convents aneers to the stright observance of fasting, sylence, dispropriety [*i.e.* poverty], and such other Austerities of the forementioned convents of Ireland whom the Almighty reeduce to their former State." [1]

IV. THE HOMECOMING OF THE POOR CLARES

There is no record, as far as I know, of the situation of the first Convent of the Poor Clares in Galway. But we know from the Corporation Manuscripts that Mother Mary Bonaventure during her tenure of office as Abbess, applied to the " Right Worshipfull the Mayor [Sir Walter Blake], the Sheriffes [Martin and James Blake] the Free Burgesses and Commonalty of the towne of Galway for a graunt of sufficient roome for building a monasterie and roomes convenient thereunto, a garden and orchard in the next island adjoining the bridge of Illanalltenagh " —advancing as a reason for the petition " the exorbitant rent " they were paying for their present premises and the fact that " notwithstanding their due payment," they were " to be thrust out of their dwelling next May, their lease being then ended." This petition was granted

[1] These words show that the record was written *before* the restoration of the Galway Convent about 1672. The reference to Sister Margerett Clare Jonyne's death in 1669 shows that it was composed *after* that date—we can therefore place its composition in Spain between 1669 and 1672.

and on the island aforesaid—the modern Nun's Island—the sisters proceeded to build " a good large and spatious house with other conveniences with the cost and charge of two hundred and odd pounds of the sisters' portions in timber and other materialls all which or the most parte thereof was lost by the usurpation of Cromwell's tyme, when the Toune of Galway was surrendered to him. Then John Morgan tooke possession of ye aforesaid Island and houses and kept the same for some years."

Two of the nuns, Sisters Ellis and Elizabeth Skerrett, at a date not mentioned, rented the house and lands on the island from John Morgan and this arrangement lasted until the Act of Settlement in the reign of King Charles II when with the most of Galway the Poor Clares' possessions fell to the lot of Madame Elizabeth Hamilton. That lady appears to have leased the two Islands Altenagh to John Kirwan, and he in his turn sold portion of his interest in the lease to " James Ryan of Dublin " who acted in this matter for Richard Martin of Galway. When the Act of Repeal was passed in James II's time the nuns appear to have made an effort to establish their claim to their holding by virtue of the grant of 1645, but according to the account of Dominick Deane " having given their pattent to Arthur French " the said " pattent " got lost among French's papers after his death and was never recovered.

However, it would appear that neither Madame Hamilton, Sir John Kirwan, nor Richard Martin, asked the nuns to pay any rent, so that in effect they had their Convent and garden and orchard " as they had it from the old corporation in Galway."

At what time the nuns resumed possession of their convent does not clearly appear ; but their old records show that " Sister Margaret Kirwan made her profession in 1673 "—so that allowing for her year of probation, they must have been there in 1672.

Mother Mary Bonaventure, though she did not return to Ireland, showed her interest in the restoration of her beloved house by sending the nuns "a brave chronicle written under her own hand, and a Remonstrance, a chalise, a holy curious Relick, many pictures, bookes, ornaments, and other fine things fitting for the Altar and divine service." "All the aforesaid things," says the later sister-chronicler, "were lost and burnt in the late Warrs Anno 1691." Burnt out of Nuns' Island, the little community secured a house in Market Street, and here they lived all through the eighteenth century. An account written in 1825 by a nun, Mother Mary Baptist Clancy, who joined the community in 1770, takes up the story at this point:

"When the persecution abated somewhat the nuns took a large house in Market Street, where they kept boarders, in order to conceal themselves from the eye of the new Magistrates, but this respite lasted not long for in 1698 all the convents in town were broken into by the military on the 1st May, the nuns turned out and obliged to take refuge among their friends in the country, but when the heat of persecution subsided they re-assembled and returned to their former dwelling; there they remained unmolested until April, 1712, when they were again turned out, and the convent converted into barracks; they were received into different houses until they could send to inform their friends in the country; a kind neighbour who lived next door, Mr. Ambrose Connor, harbor'd five or six of these poor nuns, some being nearly related to him; Providence inspired them with a desire to get in before midnight to say their Mattins in the choir, as those few were so near the convent, Mr. O'Connor supplying them with candles, and paid the sentry to let up the poor ladies to say their prayers for one hour; he agreed to the request and they read their Matins, loud as usual, which so frightened the soldiers

who occupied the cells, that they complained next day to their officers, that they were disturbed in the night by ghosts of the nuns who were praying, and that they could not stop longer in a house that was haunted. The Convent was then deserted and the poor nuns ventured to come forth from their hiding-places and once more take possession of their habitation. This same year 1712 they sent six of their community, two by two, to avoid suspicion, as they were much pressed by the Bishop and Clergy of Dublin to found a Convent of their Order there, but in a very short time after, they also experienced a vast deal of persecution from Government, some of the nuns brought to the Four Courts, their papers seized and examined, and on finding they belonged to Galway fresh orders came down to disperse any that remained, but they had notice and the most of them put on grave secular clothes and mixed with their boarders, by which means they escaped being taken, but they were afraid to claim their little spot of ground at the Nun's Island, for it retained that name tho' occupied by everyone else who pleased to graze on it; until the year 1740, the times becoming more peaceable, two of the nuns took courage and went to England,[1] to petition the Queen one of them, Sister Skerritt, being cousin-german to Lady Hamilton one of the Queen's Ladies of the Bed-Chamber and thro' her interest they obtained a grant of a few acres of their

[1] Curiously enough we find an exactly similar incident, with similarly named personages noted in the earlier part of the Chronicle of the Order—the Sister Skerrett referred to in the latter, being the second foundress of the Convent in Galway after the nuns' expulsion in Cromwellian times, and Madame Hamilton being the grantee of the lands on which it stood in Charles II's reign: "Afterwards Sister Elizabeth Skerrett went to London abt this affaire [*i.e.* the grant of the island to the nuns without rent as they had it from the old corporation] in behalfe of herself and community with great toyle and trouble and obtained a confirmation of said grant from the said Madame Hamilton as it was granted to the said Convent in ye Maioralty of Sir Walter Blake, Anno 1648."

own Island, to feed a couple of cows for them, they returned home in great joy and soon got possession of about five acres where they planted a garden, and built a small lodge for such of the sisters as might want to change air. The Convent within the town being close and filling fast with subjects to the number of 50 at one time, but in proportion as the Penal Laws were relaxed, religious vocations became more rare; the Nuns dying away the Community were reduced to twenty, and those last seven years they lost five more and no young lady had courage to join them in that same old house in Market St. built in 1575(?) and latterly quite choaked up with houses and high stones; but our present truly excellent and zealous Provincial, the Very Rev. Fr. William A. O'Meara, who is indefatigable in his exertions, ever since his appointment to promote the good of his Order, God bless him for it, he on his first visitation at Galway, saw the state the poor nuns were in, went to look out their island, found it an eligible, airy, wholesome place for a convent, and finding on examining their funds, that they were qualified to build, obliged them immediately to employ an architect to undertake the business, who in less than two years for the sum of £3,000 completed a beautiful convent, chapel and poor-school, all under one roof; and now, thank God, the entire community removed there, the 15th of this month of June in the year of our Lord, 1825. . . happy community and enchanting situation, that now bids fair with the blessing of heaven for a numerous increase of subjects to promote the honour and glory of God and good of their neighbours by instructing poor children in every moral and christian virtue."

Having left the "happy community" of Galway once more in the enchanting "situation" whence they had been expelled by Cromwellians and Williamites so long before, Mother Mary Baptist Clancy takes up the story

of the Poor Clares in Limerick, with whom she had been associated since 1817—five years after their foundation (1812). But as this story would bring us beyond the time limits we have set for ourselves, we must omit it, and say something instead of the Poor Clares in Dublin.

It was in 1712, as Mother Baptist's narrative confirmed by the State Papers shows, that the Galway Poor Clares sent a colony of eight nuns to Dublin. About the middle of the eighteenth century we find them established in a large house in North King Street. "The nuns," writes Mrs. Atkinson in her 'Life of Mary Aikenhead,' "wore no particular habit only a black stuff gown with plain linen; were much visited by their friends and the pious Catholics, to whom the convent chapel was like a glimpse of heaven itself; and went about very much as ladies living quietly in the world might do; thankful for the pity or forgetfulness that left them unmolested for an interval." Mrs. Atkinson quotes in support of her account some letters of Mrs. Delaney describing her intercourse with one of the nuns of the North King Street Convent, a Miss Crilly, an old friend of Dean Delaney's, who came to dine with them in Delville in January, 1751. "In this country," she points out, "nuns have the liberty of going to see their relatives and particular friends." Miss Crilly had been ten years in France, and was extremely sprightly, civil and entertaining. After dinner Mrs. Delaney carried her home to the convent in King Street, and having been invited to drink tea with the nuns, finished the evening in their company very agreeably. She saw their chapel, played on their organ, and admired their handsome reception room, etc., etc. Writing at a later date Mrs. Delaney says she does not see her nun Miss Crilly as often as she should like to do "as people are so offended here if *those nuns* are much taken notice of, that I should be thought *disaffected*."

Later in the eighteenth century some of the community removed to Dorset Street, where according to Mrs. Atkinson's amusing account their pious seclusion was somewhat disturbed by the proximity of Macklin's "school of acting." We learn that in a garden separated from that of the nuns by a wall not very high, the actor and his pupils used to go through their exercises in sock buskin and train their voices for the stage.[1]

The lease of the convent in Dorset Street having expired, and its renewal being only offered on exorbitant terms, the poor nuns were in the utmost distress seeing nothing in prospect but the dissolution of their community. To the fervent prayers they sent up to heaven in these straits a wonderful answer was granted. Some charitable ladies in Dublin, prominent among whom were Mary Aikenhead's friend, Mrs. O'Brien and others of her family, were just then engaged in establishing an orphanage. They proposed to the Poor Clares to take charge of it, and a suitable house at Harold's Cross having been procured, and Archbishop Murray having obtained from the Holy See a Rescript "for such alterations and mitigation of the rule as were absolutely necessary for the new duties imposed on the Community," they were installed in it early in the last century. And there they still flourish—to the glory of God and the Honour of Ireland.

V. THE DOMINICAN NUNS

About two years after the arrival of the Poor Clares in Galway, the pious citizens provided a small convent for some ladies, who, desirous of embracing the religious life, had taken the habit of St. Dominick under the direction of Fr. Gregory French, O.P. (1644). Three years later, the Papal Nuncio, Rinuccini, confirmed the founda-

[1] Mrs. Atkinson's "Life of Mary Aikenhead," 2nd edition, p. 135.

tion, and erected the house in which the nuns dwelt into a monastery with enclosure, under the title *Jesus Mariae.*

When Galway fell to the Cromwellians in 1652 all these ladies fled to Spain, where various convents at Toledo, Zamora, Vallodolid and Bilbao welcomed the poor exiles, and sheltered them, until death restored them to their true *Patria.*

A young Athenry student, one John O'Heyne, making his studies at Salamanca during the sixties of the seventeenth century visited some of these convents where the Galway nuns had found refuge, and when he came to write, some forty years after, his *Epilogus Chronologicus,*[1] his memory of them was vivid enough to enable him to draw their portraits with lifelike fidelity. Very remarkable women they were, these seventeenth century Galway women, and the old city by the Corrib had no reason to be ashamed of her daughters. Here is what O'Heyne has to say of Mother Mary O'Halloran :

" One very well known to me lived in the convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary *de las Duennas,* at Zamora, and was called Madame Mary O'Halloran ; and I can safely and without exaggeration say that never was there a woman known to me of stronger intellect. She had a more accurate acquaintance with the Spanish tongue than the Spaniards themselves, and was well versed in sacred and profane history. She was generally porteress, and Fr. Peter Moral, then prior of the convent of our fathers at Zamora, used to take counsel with her about the affairs of the nuns. On a certain day when I was his companion, he was urging this lady to procure the election as prioress of the cousin of the then bishop of Zamora, John de Astorga, a great friend of our Order ; for the election was coming off and this Irishwoman was

[1] Edited with translation and Appendix by Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P.

able to bring all the nuns to her own views. The lady in question was called Maria de Montes and when the prior had said many things in praise of her, the Irishwoman answered: 'Father Prior, *Tange montes et fumigabunt.*' The grave and truly learned man, astonished at the answer, went away immediately, and speaking to me on the way back, said he had never before met with a woman of such penetrating mind, 'and I know,' he added, 'that she is very religious and virtuous,' which was a fact.

"Another, Madam Mary Blake, died with a reputation of virtue in the Convent of Toledo. She never allowed visits except from her superiors or her confessor, for she was a woman of very great beauty and thus she preserved her affections for Christ her beloved. Another, Mary French, died with a reputation for sanctity at Vallodolid."

One by one the little band of exiles, scattered thus through the convents of Spain, died. And so it came to pass that when the accession of the Catholic King James II stirred again in every Irish Catholic heart hopes long buried of the refloresence of religious life on Irish soil, but two of the Galway community survived. These were Juliana Nolan, and Maria Lynch, both then living in Bilbao where O'Heyne had visited them on his arrival in Spain to take up his studies, and again on his departure therefrom after their completion. Mother Juliana was looked on as a saint, and the Mother Prioress of Bilbao Convent told O'Heyne many things to support that view, which he promised to put on record at a more favourable opportunity. She had been married in her early girlhood to a wealthy young Galway gentleman of her own name, but after a year the young spouses separated by mutual consent, he to become a friar in the Dominican Convent of the Blessed Virgin Mary, she to become a Dominican nun. After a short time the young man died, and Juliana devoted herself with renewed fervour to the life she had

chosen " so that " at Galway, " the religious of both sexes and the citizens esteemed her as a mirror of innocence." During the long years of her exile at Bilbao she won the hearts of all the community with which she lived, " advancing from virtue to virtue so amiable did she show herself to everyone, that all that religious house was rapt in love and admiration of her, for the thirty years which she passed there in the strict observance of our rule."

When the Provincial Fr. John Browne saw in the accession of James II the arrival of the long-desired moment to restore the foundation of the Dominican Nuns in Galway, he sent directions to Mother Juliana and Sister Maria Lynch to return there. They must have been well advanced in years at the time, and the severance of the ties they had made during their long residence at Bilbao, and the prospects of the weary and dangerous voyage must have made obedience difficult. But, as we might expect from such perfect religious, it was immediate. The two aged sisters set out from Bilbao, accompanied by two Dominican Fathers, and after a week's sailing arrived safely in Galway. What a moment that must have been when they set foot in their native city once more, and what memories must have surged into their hearts as they passed through the old streets—that had seen such happenings !

Very little time the two nuns gave themselves for sentimental memories. Without delay they secured a suitable house in the middle of the town and resumed their cloistered life, and the ' *opus magnum* ' which was the aim and end of it. Mother Juliana was instituted Prioress, and Mother Maria Lynch sub-prioress and mistress of novices. Postulants flocked to them, and soon the work was in full swing. " The Divine Office was as exactly fulfilled in this little convent just beginning as if it had been erected for years ; indeed, the number increasing

annually, they rose to midnight matins in Advent and Lent." In forming the spirit of the house Mother Juliana was admirably seconded by Mother Maria who was "a most religious woman and of great capacity for ruling and instructing." She must have been a very clever and well educated woman, too, for in Spain she had taught in the schools. Their success with the novices is attested by a little anecdote: "The Prioress on one occasion wished to dismiss a novice, though she was a relative, who said that she could not continually wear coarse woollens next her skin; owing to the strenuous resolution of the prioress this young girl became so averse to linen that she wondered (as she often repeated) at her own former foolishness."

In 1698 new sorrows came on Mothers Juliana and Maria and their little flock. In that year, all bishops and religious were ordered under pain of death to leave the country. On the vigil of SS. Philip and James rough soldiers, minions of the perjured government, broke into the convent, smashed up the grating of the "Clausura" and obliged the sisters to resume their secular dress. "It was deplorable," writes O'Heyne, who was present, "to witness the lamentations of the dear sisters which moved the very Protestants to compassion. After the community of our Galway fathers had gone to France, there was no one to minister to those daughters of ours, still remaining under strict enclosure to the very last day allowed by Parliament before the dispersion and abolition of all religious communities. These sisters of ours were left without Mass on a certain Sunday; and the fact being spread beyond the town through the country parts where I was then preaching and hearing confessions (for in that year the parish priests began to hear the confessions of the people earlier than usual on account of the dearth of priests) compassionating the lamentable lot of my sisters, I at once came and ministered to them from the

10th April till the 17th June, when I embarked on board ship with 126 other religious. . .

" When the cloister was broken into and they were all clothed in secular dress, this dear mother [Juliana] feared that they would not obey her and would go running about the town ; and about that she frequently consulted me. I always answered that she ought confidently to place all her solicitude about herself and about them in Jesus Christ, and that He would take care of them and that she ought to pray assiduously, imploring His protection for them."

She need not have feared—the dear Mother. She and Mother Maria Lynch had done their work too well, and so far from the breaking down of the cloister, and the compulsory return to secular dress being a liberation for her daughters, it was a heart-breaking trial. She had to draw on her own fund of heroism and religious resignation to console them : " When these virgins were lamenting that they were deprived of the habit, she like a heroine answered that Christ was entirely stripped when He was bound to the pillar at His scourging and likewise when He was crucified. . . . It happened for the whole time I remained with them from the breaking of cloister, not one of them even once asked to go out ; so that the prioress was much consoled, finding all as obedient as if she had the full powers of coercion as exist in other Catholic kingdoms."

Mother Juliana wished to bring her community to France, but was dissuaded from that step by Fr. O'Heyne. The nuns accordingly, took a tearful leave of their confessor on June the 17th, and henceforth set themselves as best they could to live through the new conditions. During the Penal Days, whose advent had been thus brutally heralded, they lived quietly together in secular dress, still keeping up " the canonical recitation of the Divine Office," which, as Fr. Ambrose Coleman, O.P.,

points out to their great honour, " they never abandonned," having never even " sought a dispensation from this obligation."

In 1708 and again in 1715 they were turned out of their convent and had to seek a refuge for a time among their friends ; but always when the opportunity offered, they came back to their life in common again, and at last were permitted to continue it in peace. When De Burgo was writing his *Hibernia Dominicana* (1756), there were thirty-one Sisters in the Community, the Prioress being Mother Anastasia Lynch, and Lynches, Darcys Bodkins, Brownes, Blakes, Frenches, and other good Galway names being conspicuous in the list of sisters. A little earlier the " Report on the State of Popery in Ireland in 1731 " presented to the Lords' Committee, appointed to investigate the subject, gives us an idea of the conditions under which they lived. The Galway " returns " show that the commissioners " had searched the same [*i.e.* the house in Cross Street in which the Dominicans then lived in community] and saw some young gentlewomen and girls, who alleged they lodged and boarded in the house ; that they found therein twenty-seven beds in eleven chambers, in some of which the said young women and girls lay, and the said reputed nuns in the rest."

After the expulsion of 1715 the house of the Dominican Nuns, like that of their sister Poor Clares, was turned into a barrack, and the poor religious were hard put to it, before they recovered it, to get shelter. To provide for some of them the Provincial, Fr. Hugo O'Calanan, petitioned the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Byrne, to receive some of the expelled nuns. The request met with a favourable response, and in March, 1717, eight of the sisters proceeded to Dublin and took up their residence in a house provided for them in Fisher's Lane. In September of the same year a more suitable home was

found for them in Channel Row (now North Great Brunswick Street) in the house occupied for a brief space during King James II's time by the Benedictines under Dame Ryan. Here the community and the pupils entrusted to them for education grew so rapidly that they first of all had to acquire an additional house, and then in 1748 rebuild both from the foundations.

One of the Galway nuns, Catherine Plunkett, originally destined for the new foundation in Dublin, went instead, with the permission of her superiors, to Brussels, where she lived for some years in the Convent of the English Dominican Nuns called "Spellekenhuys." In 1722 she was recalled to Ireland by the Provincial, Stephen Mac Egan, to establish (or rather to re-establish) a foundation at Drogheda. "The first house of the young community was a mud cabin near the Marsh road, on the banks of the Boyne. Novices were received, the Divine Office regularly recited, the rule observed in spite of great difficulties, and they were ministered to in secret by one of the Dominican Fathers from the Meath side of the river, who used to cross the Boyne in a little boat, at an hour early enough to enable him to say Mass for them, give them Holy Communion and return before daybreak.

"In this humble dwelling they opened a school, for which they had to obtain the sanction of the Protestant primate. After some years they removed to a large house in Dyer Street which enabled them to take in a larger number of pupils." [1]

De Burgo reports the school as flourishing at the time he wrote (1759), and enumerates among the sisters then living in community scions of the noblest houses of the Pale: Taaffe, Plunkett, Balfe, Bellew, Dillon and Bath, and not a few of the "Olde Irishrie," like O'Neill and O'Reilly.

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[1] Coleman, Appendix to O'Heyne, p. 120.

A foundation of Dominican nuns was also made in Waterford about 1735. But it does not appear to have flourished. In 1756 there were six nuns in the community, and in 1758 owing to economic pressure these were forced to disperse. The Prioress, Mother Mary Anastasia Wyse, died in the Dublin house in December of that same year.

VI. THE BENEDICTINE NUNS IN IRELAND

In the year 1681 two Irish sisters of the English community of Benedictines at Dunkirk, Dame Alexia Mary Legge and Dame Mary Josepha O'Ryan, learning that their Abbess, Dame Mary Caryll, was considering the advisability of selling the house at Dunkirk (as it did not suit her nuns' health) and removing her community to another part of France, thought that it would be a great pity to let go for less than its full value " so advantagious a place with a fine convenient monastery new built." Being practical as well as patriotic Irishwomen an excellent plan soon occurred to them. They proposed " to the vicariat and my lady Carryll that, if they would permit them, they would go into Ireland " and try to obtain from their friends and relations such a sum as might purchase the house of Dunkirk for the Irish nation—and establish it as a place where Irish Catholics might send their children " both for Religion and education."

The proposal met with a favourable reception from the Vicariat and the Abbess ; and in due course the two Irish Benedictine nuns set out for Ireland. On their way to Ostend, which was to be their port of embarkation, they called at the Abbey of Ypres, which had been founded, from Ghent, as a sister house of Dunkirk, some sixteen years earlier (1665) ; and the visit was destined to have far-reaching consequences.

Dame Ryan and Dame Legge found the Abbess of Ypres, Dame Marina Beaumont, in a very desolate frame

of mind. The nuns who had come with her from Ghent to make the foundation, and others who had subsequently joined her from Dunkirk, had abandoned her and returned to their respective houses, and at the moment of the Irish nuns' visit she had with her only one companion, Dame Flavia Carey.

When " My lady Marina " heard what was taking the two Irish Dames to Ireland, it immediately struck her that an arrangement might be made for their mutual advantage. She therefore " was very kynd to them and made them great offers if they would come at their return from Ireland with what company or fortunes they might bring and settle with her " ; and in these offers the Vicars of Ypres concurred.

Dame Ryan and Dame Legge duly arrived in Ireland and (it is pleasant to know that even in those dark Penal days, Irish generosity and devotion to religion and education were what we have always known them to be !) met with great success in their quest. " They had so good success there as in 7 or 8 months they returned with very good assurance and bills for considerable sums "— their friends in Ireland " assuming that the house and establishment should be made good unto them, and that they might send their daughters and friends to it."

Alas ! they reckoned on English faith, and stability of purpose ! And naturally they were disappointed. When the Irish nuns came back from their quest they found that my Lady Caryll had changed her mind about selling the Dunkirk house ; while my Lady Beaumont, in spite of her offers to them, had been bargaining with the Abbess of Pontoise, and not being able to come to terms with her had made an arrangement with the English Benedictine Dames at Paris, who had sent back with her two Dames Conyers and " several others that designed to be religious."

The two Irish nuns now formed the plan of going to

Paris hoping to obtain from the Queen of France the means of realising their dream of an educational foundation on the Continent for the Irish nation. But nothing came of it—and poor Dame Legge died in Paris with all her hopes yet unfulfilled.

A little after, Abbess Beaumont died, and one of the Dames Conyers being absent in England, there remained in Ypres only Dame Flavia Carey, the younger Dame Conyers and a lay sister. The Vicars of Ypres with Dame Flavia appealed to the Benedictine nuns of Dunkirk to send them help. By the advice of some prudent men, including " a Bishop of the Irish nation " then in France, two Irish nuns of the Pontoise community were also selected for the purpose ; and these two, Dames Mary Joseph Butler, " cousin to my lord Duke of Ormond," and Dame Christina Whyte, having joined Dame Ryan in Paris, the latter with Dame Christina set out for Ypres. They were not allowed to enter the convent, however, " in regard that D. Conniers with company from England beeing arrived, stole first into the monastery disputing and making great clamours, but at last by the authority of Very Rev. Father Sherborn then president of the English monks, conditions were agreed upon," and the two Dames Conyers returned to Paris. Thereupon Dame Ryan and Dame Whyte entered the convent—and in this manner was it secured for the Irish nation. The Abbess of Dunkirk sent three or four young nuns to help ; the Abbess of the Mother House of Ghent sent Dame Ursula Butler ; Dame Mary Joseph Butler, a Pontoise subject came on from Paris where Dames Ryan and Whyte had left her—and thus was the community re-constituted. " A legal donation and concession of the house of Ypres was made in favour of the Irish nation," and Dame Flavia Carey was elected Abbess, being recognised as " first Abbess of an Irish Community " (1682).

A little after the acquisition of Ypres, the indefatigable

Dame Ryan went to Ireland on another collecting expedition. She was accompanied by Dame Ursula Butler, who on Dame Ryan's return in 1684 remained in England, where she died the following year (1685). Dame Ryan brought back with her not only the moneys previously promised but five or six Irish girls for the school, and one or two for the Noviceship.

So successful was she that she was sent back to Ireland for the third time in 1685 and there she found herself when King Charles II died, and the Catholic King James II ascended the English throne.

Dame Ryan was, as we have seen, a practical clear-headed business woman. She accordingly saw that a unique chance for establishing a Benedictine monastery on Irish soil had offered itself, and being the energetic soul she was, she naturally did not let it slip. With the cordial approbation and help of Archbishop Russell of Dublin she secured a house in Channel Row, Dublin, and opened a school there (1685) to which the Countess of Clanrickarde and the first of the Catholic nobility sent their children. It is characteristic of Dame Ryan's patriotism that she placed her house under the patronage of St. Brigid.

Everything was going on splendidly when Abbess Carey died in Ypres, and Dame Mary Joseph Butler was elected in her place. Then trouble began. For some reason Dame Ryan did not commend herself to the good graces of Lady Tyrconnell, the Viceroy's wife, and the latter determined to set up a rival institution to the school in Channel Row. She got King James on her side, and of course, her own husband (though he had "sworn", according to the report of the Archbishop of Dublin, to protect Madame Ryan) and with authorisation from them, made overtures to Abbess Butler and the nuns of Pontoise to come to Ireland to make a foundation. The invitation of "her Excellency" was accepted, and in 1687 My Lady Butler and Dame Barbara Philpott from

Ypres, with Dames Margaret Markham, Mary Lawson, Anne Neville and Susan Fletcher from Pontoise, arrived in Dublin, and with much ceremony were installed in their monastery of Ship Street, which Lady Tyrconnell had suitably prepared for them.

There was a good deal of angry correspondence over the rival establishments, in which the Archbishop of Dublin, Dame Ryan, the Abbess of Dunkirk, the Abbess of Ypres, a Jesuit Father, Rev. Hugh Thady, and the Vicars of Ypres took part. But Dame Ryan, supported by the Archbishop, held firm and at last a *modus vivendi* was arranged, and the houses of Channel Row and Ship Street were both continued, and flourished until the triumph of Protestantism with William at the Boyne put an end to them both.

Abbess Butler returned without delay to Ypres. But the indomitable Dame Ryan, having sent back to Dunkirk the nuns whom the Abbess of that convent had lent her, still lingered in Ireland: "only this Dame Mary Josepha [remained] who weathered it out by ye advice of some of the Bishops and zealous Catholics in expectation of better times and circumstances, but she growing antient and infirm came back [to Dunkirk] to prepare herself to death, for though all other matters were uncertain, she was sure that could not faille. Allm. God gave her some years in order to it. It was a particular providence of His that she should live a great part of her life in the country in continual fatigues and turmoils and yet to dye in this Monastery of her Proffession. It was doutbless a recompense for her good intention. She had a long and tedious sickness before her death, received all the Rights of Our Holy Mother the Church and departed this life at ye [age] of 92, of Profession, 49. Requiescat in Pace." [1]

[1] Death Bill of Dame Mary Joseph Ryan, *Anno Domini* 1719. All particulars for the above sketch, from Dom Patrick Nolan's charming book: "The Irish Dames of Ypres."

Women in Exile

I. "IN STRANGE PLACES AND UNHEREDITARY CHURCHES"

"*QUAE regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?*" No spectacle, one imagines, can have brought home to the sister Catholic nations of Europe the sufferings Ireland had to endure for the Cause (which was not hers alone but theirs also) so poignantly as the spectacle of the high-born Irish ladies whose pitiable fate drove them, destitute and friendless, to seek an asylum in a foreign land. It was hard enough for the men, "dispersed and scattered . . . throughout Europe universally in troops and bands, poor and miserable, engaging themselves in the service of other countries for pay and hire, so that many of them were killed and others of them died and *the graves in which they were buried are unknown.*" [1] But they at least, as they ate the bread of exile, felt its bitterness sweetened by the thought that their own good swords were earning it for them. That solace was denied the women, who could only feel themselves a burden on the hospitality of the countries which had received them, and to the proud and sensitive Irish nature such a feeling must have been the hardest pain in their miserable lot.

Authorities: Philip O'Sullivan's *Historiæ Catholicæ Iberniæ Compendium* (ed. by Rev. Matt. Kelly); "The Flight of the Earls," by Tadg O'Cianain (ed. by Rev. Paul Walsh, M.A.); Fr. Holing's *Perbreve Compendium* (ed. by Card. Moran in his *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, vol. I); Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland" (ed. by Prof. Morley in "Ireland under Elizabeth").

[1] "Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell," p. 329.

The first great exodus of women from Ireland took place after the Desmond wars, when Munster was brought to the condition so vividly pictured even by the hostile annalist. "The land itself which before these wars was populous, well inhabited, and rich in all the good blessings of God—being plenteous of corn, full of cattle, well stored with fish and other good commodities—is now become so barren both of man and beast that whoever did travel from the one end of all Munster, even from Waterford to the Head of Smerwick, would not meet any man, woman or child, save in towns or cities; nor yet see any beasts but the very wolves, foxes and other like raving beasts." [1]

What had become of the once happy people who had owned those well-tilled fields "plenteous of corn," those "great mountains full of grass" that nourished many thousands of cattle, those bays and inlets teeming with fish and "other good commodities?" And above all what had become of the women? Spenser [2] in part has answered that question, showing us, in one heart-rending paragraph, what they had been reduced to, ere they died of hunger in their thousands, and were eaten by the wolves and "other like raving beasts." "Out of every corner of the woods and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death; they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eat the dead carrions, happy where they could find them; . . . and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue there withal; that in short space there was none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast."

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[1] Holinshed, vol. vi, p. 459.
[2] "View of the State of Ireland," p. 143.

Others of them found a refuge in Spain and Flanders, and an extract from the Simancas Archives which I owe to the great kindness of Fr. Reginald Walsh, O.P., seems to indicate that of these ladies can be truly said what O'Daly says of their men : " neither did it fare well with them." " At Corunna," the memorandum states, " the following Irishwomen are each in receipt of an annuity. Each of them has lost her estates and has children. [There follows a list of Irish ladies belonging to the *noblesse* of Munster : MacCarthys, O'Sullivans, Geraldines, Mac Swineys, O'Donoghues, O'Conners, O'Houlihans, Leynes, Brennans, Nolans, and Hanlays.] *It will be well to give each of them money sufficient to enable her to return to Ireland,* and also to send directions to Flanders about the Irishwomen at present residing there." [1] It will be seen that Spain had no desire to keep them permanently on her pension list and was anxious to send them back to Ireland at the earliest opportunity.

The disaster of Kinsale forced many other Irishwomen to throw themselves on Spain's charity. In his notes to his edition of Lughaid O'Clery's " Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell," Fr. Denis Murphy mentions a list drawn up by Florence Conry, the famous Franciscan, Archbishop of Tuam (him who had ministered to Red Hugh on his deathbed) of Irish exiles in sore need of aid from King Philip III and his nobles. Among the 230 names in this list are many of Irish widows and young girls mostly belonging to the great Southern families, O'Sullivan, O'Driscoll, MacCarthy, etc.[2]

It is possible that among the O'Sullivan women mentioned in the list in question were the mother and sisters of the historian, Don Philip, author of the celebrated

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[1] " Simancas Archives, Carton No. 5013—not dated but apparently written in reign of Philip II."—(Fr. Reginald Walsh's note.)

[2] *Loc. cit.* p. 329.

Historiae Catholicae Iberniae Compendium, published at Lisbon in 1621. An unusual interest attaches itself to the name of Johanna MacSwiney, Philip's mother, from the impression that she was the "one woman" who endured to the end the unimaginable sufferings of the famous "Retreat" of O'Sullivan Beare from Glengariffe to Leitrim, and arrived at O'Rourke's castle, one of the thirty-five survivors of the thousand the expedition originally counted. But this is a mistake due to an incorrect interpretation of Don Philip's story of the "Retreat." He has not given the name of the heroic woman whose endurance, like that of his father, has excited in a particular manner his admiration. "I am astonished that Dermot O'Sullivan, my father, an old man near 70, and the woman of delicate sex were able to go through these toils, which youths in the flower of age and height of their strength were unable to endure." [1] She was doubtless a plebeian—and "our Irish historians," to quote once more Mr. Standish O'Grady, "give no plebeian names."

Though Johanna MacSwiney took no part in the "Retreat," having been left behind with Donald O'Sullivan's lady and other gentlewomen "concealed in the gorges and tops of the mountains" around Glengariffe,[2] she is a sufficiently remarkable figure to arrest our attention. In our own days we have seen the whole world moved to admiration by the heroism of the MacSwiney women. Let us examine of what stuff they were made in the sixteenth century.

Johanna, the daughter of Donald MacSwiney and Margaret MacCarthy, was the daughter, sister, wife and mother of soldiers. Her son has proudly recorded how

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[1] Hist. Cath. p. 254.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 243.

Donald MacSwiney and his *ten* brothers bore themselves as battle-leaders in the fight for Catholic Ireland :—

"Illius genitor Donaldus stirpe Suinnus
Germanos habuit (martia fulcra) decem.
Magnanimi undeni praestanti robore fratres
Bellica contra hostem signa tulere duces,
Perque suum saeclum, felici marte valentes
Haeresis Angliacae fortiter ausa vetant." [1]

At an early age she married Diarmuid O'Sullivan, a cousin of the great Donald of Beare and Bantry. "In all the Munster wars, from the year 1569, when St. Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth, down to the death of Desmond in 1585, Dermod was in the field at the head of a chosen band of Bear infantry. Accompanied by three of his brothers-in-law, Eugene, Edmund and Maur MacSwiney, he was among the first that rose at the call of the chivalrous Fitzmaurice in 1569; again when the same chief landed in 1579, Dermot and the MacSwinies enrolled themselves under John FitzGerald, brother to the Earl of Desmond, and shared all the dangers of the contest to its close. He was one of those who paid the last rites to Dr. Sanders in the forest of Glenglass. Involved in the general proscription of the ruined house of Desmond, he long baffled the pursuit of his enemies, but was at length dangerously wounded in an encounter with royalists, having lost on that and other occasions some of his bravest kindred and companions in arms." [2] Giollaiosa and Bernard MacSwiney, Johanna's brothers, were seized and executed; another brother, Ruairi, fled to the chieftains of North Connacht and Ulster. Diarmuid would seem to have made good his escape, and doubtless the seventeen years that followed were years of com-

[1] Poem prefixed to O'Sullivan's *Decas Patritiana*.
[2] Rev. Matt. Kelly's Preface to *Hist. Cath.* p. vi.

parative peace mostly spent by Johanna's side in the strong castle which he had built in Dursey Island. Here their son Philip was born, and very probably others of their seventeen children.

When the Spaniards landed at Kinsale and the call of his chieftain, Donald, reached Dursey, old Diarmuid not only responded himself but led thirteen valiant sons to Donald's standard. Of these thirteen every one laid down his life for Ireland before the war ended. Not many mothers, even in those heroic days, can have had such a record. The remaining members of the family were Philip, Donald, and two sisters, Helena and Leonora. Philip and Donald were sent with their cousin in February, 1602, to the Spanish Court—and thither about a year after, the remainder of the family followed them.

Within that year's space terrible things had happened in Dursey—things, which we cannot read without trembling to-day, and whose effect on Johanna MacSwiney, as she and her little girls fled from hiding place to hiding place among the mountains, can only be imagined. Her son has written the narrative of the massacre of Dursey Island in words which seem to burn the page they fill.[1] It took place during the progress of the siege of Dunboy.

"Owen O'Sullivan and John Bostock, an Englishman, sailed over to the island of Dursey, in which was a monastery built by Bonaventure, a Spanish Bishop, but dismantled by pirates, a church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, and a fort built by my father, Diarmuid, which was garrisoned by a few of Cornelius O'Driscoll's men. The inhabitants were terrified by the sudden arrival of the enemy; some sought the protection of the altars, some ran to hide, some betook themselves to the fort, which the few armed men surrendered on the enemy's promise of safety, as it had no cannon or forti-

[1] *Hist. Cath.* p. 238.

fications. The English, after their wonted manner, committed a crime far more notable for its cruelty than their honour. Having dismantled the fort and fired the church and houses, they shot down, hacked with swords, or ran through with spears the now disarmed garrison and others, old men, women and children, whom they had driven into one heap. Some ran their swords up to the hilt through the babe and mother, who was carrying it on her breast, others paraded before their comrades little children, writhing and convulsed on their spears, and finally binding the survivors they threw them into the sea over jagged and sharp rocks, showering on them shots and stones. In this way perished about 300 Catholics, the greater part of whom were the people of my father, Diarmuid."

While O'Sullivan, accompanied by Diarmuid, was accomplishing his great "Retreat" to O'Rourke's country, O'Sullivan's wife and Johanna and other ladies were, as we have seen, left behind in Glengariffe. About the end of 1603 Cornelius O'Driscoll, who had been sent to Spain by O'Sullivan, returned with 2,000 pieces of gold from Philip III. He used the money to convey the ladies and their children to Spain,[1] where they were shortly after joined by their Chieftain and Diarmuid. The King of Spain rewarded Donald's fidelity to him by making him a Count, decorating him with the Cross of St. James and assigning to him a pension of 300 gold pieces a month. To Diarmuid were allowed fifty gold pieces a month [2]—and as provision was made for the education of their children, doubtless Johanna and he were able to live on this sum at Corunna in comfort. Diarmuid lived to the great age of nearly one hundred, and when he died and was buried in the Franciscan monastery at Corunna, Johanna

[1] *Hist. Cath.* p. 258.
[2] *Ib.* p. 261.

did not long survive him. Their two surviving sons, Philip and Domnhall, having received a brilliant education at Compostella under Fr. Synott, Vendama and Peter Marcilla, joined the Spanish navy and Domhnall was killed in an action against the Turks. Of their sisters, Helena got married to some one whose name is not mentioned, and was drowned, poor girl, returning to Ireland. The other, Leonora, became at an early age a nun in the convent of Stelliferi, and when her brother wrote the poem prefixed to the *Decas Patritiana* [1] in which these family details are enshrined, was yet alive.

About twenty years before Don Philip and his small brother, Domnhall, were sent to Compostella for their education, a little Irish girl arrived there with her mistress, on pilgrimage, whose extraordinary story excited a great deal of interest. The good Jesuit, Fr. Holing, who records it [2] has, however, forgotten to record her name, and though he tells us that the little maiden died in Spain "worn out by fever and fatigue" he makes no mention of the place of her death. She had accompanied Margaret Barnewall on her flight from Dublin to St. Malo, and shared all the dangers and marvels of that voyage. The night of their arrival off the port of their destination, the captain and the more responsible members of the crew went ashore, promising that their two passengers would be put off in the morning. A couple of ruffian sailors, left in charge of the ship, attacked the poor fugitives in the middle of the night, and when they refused to yield to their demands, beat them so savagely with ropes that, exhausted with their own efforts, the assailants became too tired to continue and went away to their bunks to rest. Taking advantage of this respite, Margaret persuaded her young companion to seek safety by trying to

[1] Published by Rev. M. Kelly in his Preface to the *Hist. Cath.* p. xv *et seq.*

[2] *Spic Oss.* i. p. 106.

swim ashore. Like all Irish ladies Miss Barnewall and her maid wore mantles, and by God's favour these acted as a sort of buoy and sustained them above water until they reached the shore. Here a new danger awaited them. The little girl remembered she had heard the French sailors tell during the voyage that the city of St. Malo was guarded at night by savage dogs. Margaret encouraged her by reminding her how marvellously God protected them in the waters, and she herself advanced courageously, repeating the verse "Many dogs are come about me"—but the poor little girl's nerves were not equal to the ordeal, and she kept timorously behind her mistress's back. But God was with them here, too. The dogs were actually around them, and one of the fiercest was already at Margaret's throat, when He for Whose dear sake she had quitted home and kindred, inspired her to speak a few words to him in Irish. (He must have been an Irish wolf-dog one imagines, for the breed was held in great price all through Europe.) The effect was instantaneous. The dog immediately let go his hold on Margaret, and giving as it were an order to the other dogs led the way to the city gates, where he stood on guard beside his two poor countrywomen until morning. The next day the news of the wonder having reached the ears of the Bishop of St. Malo he sent for Margaret and her companion. It happened that among the crowd of citizens whom the extraordinary incident had attracted to the scene was an influential merchant who "twenty years before had learned Irish and English in the house" of Miss Barnewall's father, "for the Irish," interpolates Fr. Holing at this point, "have important commercial relations with the French, especially of St. Malo, and the Irish send their sons to France and the French their sons to Ireland for the sake of learning the language." It can be imagined how heartily the St. Malo man welcomed Margaret, whom he had last seen in her father's house, a

little girl of thirteen, and how pleasant his friendship and the attentions of the good Bishop made their stay in St. Malo. But Margaret and her little maid did not tarry long there, having made a vow in the midst of their dangers to go to Compostella and other holy places on pilgrimage. Here, after a short time, the little maiden died. Very wonderfully had God acted towards them, and it is to detract nothing from the miracles which He was pleased to work for them, but rather to add to our gratitude towards Him for them, to point out that He used as His instruments—a mantle of sturdy *Irish manufacture* to save them from the waters, and the *Irish language* to save them from being torn to pieces by the dogs.

It was for Spain—though they were never destined to set foot on its soil—that another band of Irish exiles, perhaps the most famous in our history, set sail on the "Feast of the Cross in Autumn," 1607. "This was a distinguished crew for one ship," say the Four Masters,[1] as they record the great nobles and ladies who were included in the "Flight of the Earls"—"for it is certain that the sea had not supported, and the winds had not wafted from Ireland in modern times, a party of one ship who would have been more illustrious or noble, in point of genealogy, or more renowned for deeds, valour, prowess, or high achievements than they, if God permitted them to remain in their patrimonies until their children should have reached the age of manhood."

Amidst that noble band our interest is, for the moment, exclusively centred on the ladies who figure in it. Of these the Four Masters mention only O'Neill's Countess, Catherina, the daughter of MacGennis of Iveagh; Nuala, the daughter of O'Donnell, wife of the traitor Nial Garbh (whom she had left when he went over to Sir Henry

[1] under date, 1607.

Dowcra, and thus brought about her great brother's downfall); and Rosa, daughter of O'Doherty, and wife of Cathbar O'Donnell. With them went three waiting women, who helped them to take care of the little children; but with the exception of "Owny Ni Sheyle's"[1] we learn none of their names. A list quoted by Fr. Paul Walsh from the Borghese MSS. mentions as other ladies of the party, the wife of Art Og O'Neill, the wife of Sean na b punta O' hAgain, and the wife of Eamonn Gruamdha MacDaibhid.[2]

Of the Countess Catherina we know little except through the revelations of the State Papers, and if these present her character in an unfavourable light we must remember the unreliability of the source. It would appear that Sir Toby Caulfield, at the instigation of Chichester, attempted to get information from her[3] that would incriminate her lord, whose destruction was being sedulously planned. There was a kind of an idea that she did not "get on well" with her distinguished husband; complaints about his "drunken habits" were put in her mouth, and Sir John Davies, in his account of the departure of the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell, mentions as one of the incidents of the former's journey from Dungannon to Lough Foyle a serious unpleasantness between O'Neill and his Countess. "It is likewise reported that the countess his wife, being exceedingly weary, slipped down from her horse, and weeping said she could go no farther; whereupon the earl drew his sword, and swore a great oath that he would kill her in the place, if she would not pass on with him, *and put on a more cheerful countenance withal.*[4]

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[1] Meehan's "Fate and Fortunes of Tyrone and Tyrconnell," p.226.
[2] "Flight of the Earls," p. x.
[3] The attempt seems to have been made at the suggestion of Niall Garbh—(Meehan, p. 47).
[4] Meehan, *op. cit.* p. 98.

One cannot avoid the inference that without being exactly disloyal to her husband, she was not a very helpful wife to him at this crisis of his fortunes; and though we must take Chichester's and Sir Toby Caulfield's account of what they got out of her with some reserve, still it is to be feared they got something.

"The Deputy (writes Chichester himself to Cecil, in February, 1606) directed Sir Toby Caulfield to sound the Countess of Tyrone, who may reveal her husband's secrets. He knows it to be an uncivil thing *to feed the humours of a woman* to learn the secrets of her husband; but his zeal for the king's service will be an excuse. Caulfield tempted her by offers to give secret notice if she knew of any practices the Earl had. She replied she knew of nothing, but she would not for all the world be known to accuse him of anything that would endanger his life. Caulfield then assured her she never would be discovered; *and, having sworn her,* examined her as to other *ideas* and *suspicions* of the earl's intentions and actions." [1]

One thing seems certain: Caesar's wife was *not* above suspicion—else surely the unspeakable Sir Toby would never have dared to approach her with his degrading proposals to spy on her own husband!

Nine years late (1615) we catch a glimpse of her in the Salviati Palace at Rome, "still young and fair," but sick, poor thing, in heart perhaps as much as body. A certain Doctor Doyne, who was in Rome at the time, was called in to attend her—the papal physician, Dr. Barnardini, not having succeeded in doing her any good. And he gives us a pretty full account of the household and its ways.[2] The following year her husband died, and she drops completely out of our notice afterwards. Fr. Meehan states that despite a diligent search among the State Papers he

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[1] Meehan, *op. cit.* p. 309.
[2] *Ib.* p. 43.

failed to discover whether she returned to Ireland or died in Rome.[1] The probability is that she retired to Louvain, where the other ladies of the "Flight" had returned after the deaths of Ruairi and Caffer O'Donnell.[2]

In that sad household at the Salviati Palace there was one lovely face to cheer the poor Countess—that of her beautiful daughter. Fr. Meehan quotes the following piece of gossip from an Italian letter dated Rome, January 7, 1615: "Of Tyrone I have not been able to learn much. His departure hence is not believed, for he is as well off here as he could be in any other part of the world. He has a very beautiful daughter, marriageable, and greatly admired [*vistosa*]; so much so, that it will amaze us all if he take her with him unmarried. Withal Tyrone does not wish the ladies of his house should have much intercourse with those of Rome, for he is averse to the fashionable life of this city, and, as you know, very old and suspicious. Pray heaven it may not enter the heart of one who must be nameless here, to fall in love with *her*." [3]

Of this daughter and her fate I have not been able to discover anything.[4] Was she the Brigid Ni Neill to whom Aodh MacAingil (Hugh MacCaghwell, O.F.M., Archbishop of Armagh) sent his poem written on the occasion of the taking of the young Baron Hugh O'Neill's skull from the Tomb in Montorio? The poem is signed "Hugo Armachanus," and therefore shows Brigid alive in 1626

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[1] Meehan, 329.

[2] Fr. Gregory Cleary, O.F.M., discovered recently a record of her death in Naples.

[3] Meehan, p. 303*n*.

[4] Fr. Brendan Jennings found in the Brussels Archives a Permit (dated January 1, 1661) to return to Ireland with her family to "Da. Brigida O'Neill, widow of the Mre. de Campo D. Patricio O'Donel, who served his Majesty [of Spain] for many years with a tercio of Irish Infantry."

—Aodh having been appointed to the Archbishopric in March, and died in the September of that year.[1]

It is not to be wondered at that the great Hugh O'Neill kept the ladies of his household as retired as possible. There were spies and informers even in the Salviati Palace itself, the most famous, or infamous, being Robert Lombard, the nephew of the Primate. Dr. Doyne's "relation" referred to above mentions Robert, in a somewhat significant way, as the cause of the ill-understanding between O'Neill and Archbishop Peter Lombard. "Tyrone's wife is young and fair, and the Lord Primate of Ireland with his men, six Flemings had one part of the palace these seven years but now, because he and Tyrone could not agree, he is removed into another palace, *but some say that this Robert Lombard is the cause of that.* I know not; but he is departed out of this city a great while ago."

He had in fact, on pretext of a pilgrimage, gone to Venice to sell his "informations" to Sir Dudley Carleton, the English Ambassador to that Republic.[2]

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[1] Published with translation by Rev. Paul Walsh in his "Gleanings from Irish Manuscripts," p. 96 *et seq.* Fr. Walsh says, "The Brigid Ni Neill to whom the piece was sent was possibly his [Baron Hugh's] sister, though I have not been able to trace her elsewhere."

[2] See Meehan, *op. cit.* pp. 309, 250, 277–281.

Women in Exile

II. " THE WOMEN OF THE PIERCING WAIL "

A more appealing figure than the Countess Catiorina, is Nuala, " the daughter of O'Donnell," " the woman of the piercing wail," whom the white flashlight of the great poem shows bending over the graves of her " noble brothers justly dear--Her nephew long to be deplored," like a figure of Ireland mourning uncomforted her lost and exiled children. True daughter of Inghin Dubh—of her who had " the heart of a hero and the soul of a soldier," true sister of the vehement fiery-souled Aodh Ruadh, " the lion in strength and force with determination and power of character so that it was not allowed to contradict his word, for what he ordered to be done should be done on the spot "—she, too, had done " on the spot " what was to be done when her husband, Niall Garbh, had betrayed her great brother, and with him the Cause of Irish liberty. She had left him at once. Perhaps she had never learnt to love the " rough " bridegroom with whom her masterful mother's politics had matched her in her youth. But surely to leave her children must have been a cruel suffering to one with such capacity for devotion as she was to show herself capable of. And yet this, too, she did " on the spot," when her lord went over to the English, and sold the Cause. According to O'Donovan she had borne two sons to Niall, Neachtan

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Authorities : " The Flight of the Earls," by Tadhg O Cianain, Edited from Author's MS. by Rev. Paul Walsh, M.A. ; Lugaidh O'Clery's " Life of Red Hugh O'Donnell," Edited by Rev. Denis Murphy, S.J.; Meehan's " Fates and Fortunes of Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnell"; Mooney's " History of Irish Franciscans"; Fr. Paul Walsh's " Gleanings from Irish MSS."

and Manus.[1] Neachtan was evidently taken in hands early by Niall's new masters, for we find him in Dublin (whence his father attempted to steal him away) at the time of Sir Cahir O'Doherty's Rising. He was subsequently sent to Oxford, and thence to the Tower of London during his unfortunate father's incarceration there, but was eventually released, perhaps after his father's death, in 1626. The other son, Manus, lived to redeem his father's faults. "He was," says O'Donovan, "a Colonel in the army of the Confederate Catholics under Owen Roe O'Neill," and died for Ireland at the Battle of Benburb. From him are descended the O'Donnells of Mayo.

It was on October the 3rd, 1600, that Niall Garbh who had been bribed by Dowcra with a promise of the "whole county of Tirconnell to him and his heires," rode into the English camp at Derry with his "40 horse and 60 foote," and turned the fortunes of the whole campaign. "Woe to the mind that conceived, woe to the heart that entertained, woe to the tongue that advised that violent, ruinous, odious, malicious plan that was entered into then! Woe to the kinsman who abandoned his own tribe, and his earthly lord, his friends and relatives, to go plotting and uniting with his enemies and his foes!" The sorrowful lament of Lughaidh O'Clery for that "great defection" expresses the feelings of each of us towards Niall Garbh—though we try to remember that he had his own wrongs to avenge, and that Inghin Dubh's plans for her son's greatness had not been carried out without injustice to the claims which Niall represented. Still, Niall betrayed not only Aodh Ruadh—but Ireland; and all our sympathies go with Nuala when she left him at once and returned to her own people.

Passionately devoted to her own family as she was,

[1] *Four Masters*, Appendix, p. 2385.

her feelings of resentment towards Niall must have been immeasurably aggravated by the events that followed. In an engagement near Lifford, poor young Manus O'Donnell, Nuala's brother, was killed by the hand of Niall. Her father, old Hugh, died of grief and was buried in his son's tomb in the Abbey of Donegal. A year later that tomb was desecrated. Niall and his party seized the monastery, drove out "the sons of life, and the psalm-singing elders of the Order of St. Francis," fortified themselves in those holy places, and finally caused their destruction by fire.

When the "Flight of the Earls" was hastily decided on (following advice from Colonel Henry O'Neill in the Low Countries, who had got wind of the plots on foot for the destruction of O'Neill and Ruairi O'Donnell), Nuala made up her mind, with her customary promptitude, to accompany her brothers Ruairi and Cathbar. Her principal reason seems to have been to "mother" Ruairi's young son, the nine-months-old Aodh (whose own mother, Brigid Fitzgerald—then on a visit at Maynooth, with her own people—had to be left behind, for want of time to communicate with her). Very faithfully did Nuala acquit herself of her charge.

The dangers of the voyage, in the height of the equinoctial storms, have been graphically described for us by Tadhg O'Cianain; but, with mediaeval stoicism, he says little of its discomforts. These must have been appalling, especially to the ladies and little children. They were three whole weeks on the seas "with excessive storms and dangerous bad weather," and ninety-one persons of varying conditions were shut up in a small craft that was hardly better than a fishing smack. Their provisions ran dangerously short before the journey was over. "As they left the ship," says Tadhg, "all the drink they had was five gallons of beer and less than one barrel of water."

They had been driven by stress of weather—and bad seamanship one fears—on the French coast instead of the Spanish, and landed at Quilleboeuf on the Feast of St. Francis. It was decided to send the ladies and children, the servants and most of the *impedimenta* in boats by the river route to Rouen, while the gentlemen rode. O'Cianain must have been of the river party for he described its *contretemps* with much feeling. "The tide turned against them, together with the strength and force of the river so that they were brought back a long distance. . . They had no cause of complaint with any danger and storm they endured on sea in comparison with all the trouble and danger of death they experienced then, except that they had wine and water within reach when they were thirsty." If even Tadhg was overcome, let us think for a moment what delicately bred ladies and tiny children must have suffered.

Anxiety of mind was added to their bodily discomforts when news reached them at Rouen that the gentlemen of the party had been put under a sort of arrest by the Chief Marshal of Normandy, who detained them, pending the King's instructions, at Lisieux—the town since famous for its connection with the "Little Flower." The Marshal had the consideration to allow Maguire and some other gentlemen to go to Rouen to report the situation to the ladies. It was critical enough, as the English ambassador, Sir George Carew, left no stone unturned to get King Henry IV to stop their journey, and have them handed over to the English authorities; but fortunately Henry IV's admiration for O'Neill's military achievements prevented the success of these intrigues. It is recorded by O'Cianain that the Scottish gentleman who was sent by Carew post-haste to London for instructions spent a night at the hostel where the Irish ladies were.

It was doubtless this Scotchman whom they had to

thank for the indignity put on them by the Governor of Rouen, who called the next day (Saturday, October 13) and ordered the ladies to leave the town. "They received this order with concern and grief, because they thought it was by reason of misfortune happening to their lords that they themselves got this sudden command." Their entreaties obtained from the Governor permission to remain in Rouen until Monday—and fortunately on Sunday night O'Neill and the other gentlemen arrived in the city with "the passport and warrant from the King of France," who had given the English Ambassador his celebrated answer: "France is free."

Henry, however, had put his own interpretation on the "liberty" which France was ready to afford the fugitives. He made them abandon their design of going straight to Spain, and directed them to proceed to Flanders instead. Matthew Tully, who had been sent to interview King Henry, on behalf of the Irish lords, now preceded them to Brussels to inform Colonel Henry O'Neill of the change of plans.

The incidents of the journey, the discomforts of the hostels, the varied scenery of the route, the churches and the relics of the towns they passed through, are described in detail by O'Cianain, so that we can follow step by step the little party which set out from Rouen on October 15th and arrived in Arras, on Flemish territory, on the 18th. They travelled as follows: thirty-one persons, on horseback, the ladies and children in two coaches, three waggons for the *impedimenta*, and forty persons on foot. At Arras, where the governor received them honourably, they were greeted by a distinguished countryman—Dr. Eugene MacMahon (afterwards Archbishop of Dublin) who had come from Douai to meet them. What a comfort it must have been to see the Irish priest's kind face!

At Douai, which they reached three days later, the

party were entertained at the Irish College, and here a moving scene took place when Ruairi and Cathbar and Nuala looked once more upon the face of Fr. Flaithri O'Maolconaire, and heard from him all the details of that sad deathbed at Simancas, at which he had assisted. To hear the last words, to gather up the last memories of Aodh Ruadh must have been sweeter to Nuala's faithful heart than all the " verses and speeches in Latin, Greek and English " (why no Irish ?) the Colleges had prepared for them.

On October 30th Colonel Henry O'Neill came from Brussels to Hal to meet them. The meeting must have caused many emotions to Nuala who saw her dead sister Siobhan's son for the first time in many years, and marked him changed from the " dear Irish boy " she remembered to the dashing young Colonel of the Irish regiment.

After leaving Hal the party went to Louvain, where palaces were hired for the ladies ; the gentlemen, after a short rest, intending to set out for Spain.

The ladies had barely moved into the palaces that had been taken for them, and settled down after the parting with O'Neill and the other lords, when they were startled by the news of their return. The intrigues of the English ambassador, Edmonds, had succeeded to this extent that Spain was closed to them ! Thus it was that the Spanish king treated his Irish allies !

The exiles, to whom it had been made plain by this time, that they were wanted nowhere, at length, through the good offices of the Internuncio, Cardinal Bentivoglio, received an invitation from the Pope to settle in Rome. They spent the winter in Louvain, and set out for the Eternal City on February 28th. The gentlemen, thirty-two in number, were on horseback ; there was a coach for the ladies, but the little boys had to be left behind. The intention probably was to have them educated under the care of the Franciscan Fathers—though some of

them were very young for their guardians to begin to think of their "book" education yet awhile.[1] Little Sean O'Neill was barely seven; his brother Brian was only three. Aodh, the tiny son of Ruairi O'Donnell and Brigid Fitzgerald (Nuala's special charge), had hardly completed his first year. The other Aodh, his little cousin, son of Cathbar O'Donnell and Rosa O'Doherty, had reached the mature age of two-and-a-half! There can have been few more moving scenes in all our moving history than that which occurred when these little exiles took leave in this foreign city of their parents whom (with one exception) they were never to see again.

Fortunately the boys had good friends in Louvain. We learn from Mooney in his account of the fate of one of them, Brian (murdered at the age of thirteen by an agent of England, even at the Archdukes' Court at Brussels) that he was reared "almost from his cradle by our brotherhood, and by them brought up so excellently" that when he was admitted (at the age of nine) as *minimo* or page to "the Archdukes" "every one regarded him with affectionate admiration, blessed his innocent soul, and called him their young rosebud, redolent of choicest virtues. A fair child in sooth was Brian, devout, fond of books, learned men and military science in which had God spared him, he might one day have rivalled his illustrious father."

The journey to Rome through Lorraine and Switzerland occupied two months. It was on April the 29th that the party reached Castelnuovo, "from which place they could see the belfries and the walls of Rome." They had crossed the Alps by the Saint Gotthard in an unfavourable season, and though the journey through Italy had many compensations, both in the honours

[1] Fr. Brendan Jennings discovered recently that they were left in charge of some nuns, "les Soeurs Blanches."

paid them in the chief cities, and in the spiritual comfort they derived from their pilgrimages to Assisi and Loreto, they must have been very weary—the ladies especially—when they reached Ponte Molle and found Primate Peter Lombard, and " a noble young man " (his nephew Robert, perhaps, who was afterwards to turn informer) awaiting them with the coaches sent by the Cardinals, and the Cardinals' stewards, to welcome them to " the head [city] of the Christians."

In the Salviati Palace which had been placed at their disposal, and where they found Primate Lombard as their fellow guest, Nuala and the other ladies may have been, for a time, happy enough. It must have been bliss to think that their journeyings were over, and to ease their sad thoughts of exile there was many a comfort in the Holy City—churches and shrines where surely a woman's prayers must ascend to God with a special efficacy, kindness of every sort from the Holy Father himself, and the Cardinals, who adorned his Court, recognition of all these faithful Irish had done for the Catholic cause.

Alas ! The peace and happiness were to be of short duration. In July the younger men of the party, Ruairi and Cathbar O'Donnell, young Aodh O'Neill, called the Baron of Dungannon, and their chaplain Dr. Domnhall O'Carroll, wearying of the stagnant air of a Roman summer, went to Ostia for a breath of the sea. Here apparently they were all poisoned, and their deaths took place in quick succession. Earl Ruairi died on July the 29th, his page Muiris, on August the 3rd, Rev. Dr. O'Carroll on August the 18th ; Cathbar O'Donnell on September 15th, and the Baron of Dungannon, though he seemed to rally for a time, a year later. Nor was that all—Cuchonnacht Maguire and Seamus MacMahon, having put in at Ostia for a night, caught the same " fever " and died at Genoa on August the 12th, 1608. It is worthy of note that even

at Louvain an attempt had been made to introduce "a poisoner" into the Irish Lords' kitchen, but the plot had been detected by the vigilance of old Hugh himself, and the Government spy had to report that "Tyrone has taken a straight order that there shall be no access to his kitchen." [1]

It was on the "mount whereon the martyr saint was crucified," in San Pietro in Montorio that the young Irish princes found a grave and a resting place. And though they died far from Donegal, "the burial place of their ancestors," there was comfort to those weeping ladies who followed their biers up the Via Lungara in the thought that their dead forms were clothed in the blessed habit of St. Francis, just as they would have been at home in holy Ireland, and that the sons of St. Francis guarded the sacred spot where they were to await the Resurrection.

How long Nuala and Rosa remained in Rome after the death of Baron Hugh (September, 1609) we do not know. Evening after evening, clad in their garments of mourning, the noble ladies climbed to the heights of the Janiculum to pray at the graves of their dead. It is thus that the poet Owen MacWard (whether with the eyes of the body or with those of the spirit) has seen them, and the picture of Nuala bending over the historic grave has become, through his genius, an imperishable part of the heritage of our race.

"O women of the piercing wail
Who mournest o'er yon mound of clay
With sigh and groan,
Would God thou wert among the Gael!
Thou wouldst not then from day to day
Weep thus alone.
. . . .

[1] *Cal. State Papers*, 1608–1610, p. 641.

"Two Princes of the line of Conn
Sleep in their cells of clay beside
O'Donel Rua.
Three royal youths, alas! are gone
Who lived for Erin's weal, but died
For Erin's woe!
Ah! could the men of Ireland read
The names these noteless burial stones
Display to view,
Their wounded hearts afresh would bleed,
Their tears gush forth again, their groans
Resound anew.

. . . . .

"What do I say? Ah, woe is me
Already we bewail in vain
Their fatal fall!
And Erin once the great and free,
Now vainly mourns her breakless chain
And iron thrall!
Then, daughter of O Donel, dry
Thine overflowing eyes, and turn
Thy heart aside,
For Adam's race is born to die,
And sternly the sepulchral urn
Mocks human pride!

"Look not, nor sigh, for earthly throne,
Nor place thy trust in arms of clay,
But on thy knees
Uplift thy soul to God alone,
For all things go their destined way
As He decrees.
Embrace the faithful crucifix
And seek the path of pain and prayer
Thy Saviour trod;
Nor let thy spirit intermix
With earthly hope and worldly care
Its groans to God."

The last glimpse we get of Nuala is in Louvain [1]—where she probably lived on the pension of " two hundred crowns a month " which Cornwallis, the English Ambassador at Madrid, reports to his masters at home as given to her and Rosa. In 1615 Turnbull, the English agent at the Court of the Archdukes, thus reports to King James :—

" The Lady Nuala, sister to O'Donnell that died in Rome, and now tutoress to the late Earl of Tyrconnell's son, living at Louvain, took occasion, the last week, to pass through this town (Brussels), under colour of going on pilgrimage to Our Lady of Hal, and late in the evening sent, as secretly as she could, to request me to come to her lodging, not daring as she pretended to come to mine, and speak with her about some business concerning your Majesty ; and afterwards conjuring me to be secret in that she should reveal told me she could not in any other matter do your Majesty so much service as in the withdrawing of the said young gentleman from hence, wherein she would use mine assistance. . . The principal points she did urge was your Majesty's grace and pardon for the said gentleman, together with the restoring of his father's land."

Nothing came of these overtures and both Nuala and her ward, young Aodh, died far from Ireland and were buried—he, at sea—she in one of those " strange places and unhereditary churches " to which so many of her kindred were consigned.

About the place of her sepulture there is some doubt : Fr. Meehan quotes an obit from the fly-leaf of the MS. of the Martyrology of Donegal as showing that she was buried with Margaret and Hugh O'Donnell before the

[1] Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., found recently in the Brussels Archives note of payment " through a secret channel " to " Dona Nola O daniel " of a monthly pension of 175 crowns, dated April 20, 1616.

high altar of the church of St. Anthony—the celebrated Irish Franciscan College at Louvain. An elegy by Feargal og Mac an Bhaird, published by Fr. Paul Walsh in his "Gleanings," seems to indicate that she was buried in Italy, though another *lectio* gives *Easpain*, Spain. After a lament for the fate of Aodh Ruadh, Ruairi and Cathbar, the poem goes on to mourn for Nualadh :—

"San Eadáil na n-eas dtana,
Ionann is éag Nualadha
Atá géis chnó-mhuige Chuinn
Cró-luighe dá héis oruinn.

Nualaidh dhuais-líonmar dóigh cháigh
Mairfidh go laithe an luain-bhráith.
Tosach garma crú gCriomthain
Clú a hanma idir Eirionchaibh."

. . . . .

A very strange story is narrated by Abbé Mac Geoghegan about an alleged sister of Aodh O'Donnell, Nuala's ward, which may fittingly find a place here.

When the ship arrived in Lough Swilly, which was to bear away "the Earls," Brigid Fitzgerald, the wife of Ruairi, Earl of Tyrconnell, was at home with her grandmother, old Mabel, Countess of Kildare, at Maynooth. Thither there came to her one day a Franciscan friar, "Owen Groome Magrath," who, speaking to her through an interpreter, a priest called Denis Morcan (for Fr. Owen knew no English, and the Countess no Irish), told her of the sudden departure of her lord from Ireland, and the causes thereof, imparted to her Ruairi's last loving messages for her, and gave her the eighty-one pieces of gold which the Earl had sent her as a token "wishing her not to be grieved at anything." Poor Brigid could not help being grieved "for that her lord had left her behind, which she thought was for want of love," and Fr. Owen comforted her by telling her that if Ruairi

had known sooner of his going he would have taken her with him ; the kind friar then suggested that, with the consent of her friends, she might follow her lord, and subsequently sent one of his own Order, Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald, to wait on her and offer to make arrangements for her voyage, accompany her as her " ghostly father " and interpreter and assist her in every way until she should be safe with her husband.[1]

At first it would appear that Brigid was anxious to join her husband, but when Fr. Fitzgerald had completed the arrangements for her departure she told him she had changed her mind and intended to go to England instead. It is almost certain that this change of plan was rendered necessary by the interference of Chichester, who, it is stated, actually had her escorted there. She was well received at the Court of King James, " where, when she came," says Sir Richard White, in a letter to Lord Shrewsbury, " she kissed his Majesty's hand ; and a sweeter face you never saw. Indeed the king wondered her husband left so fair a face behind him."

Some time after her arrival in England poor Countess Brigid is stated to have given birth to a daughter called Mary, whose romantic history is now to be related. After the death of Ruairi, the widow married Nicholas Barnewell, and had a pension of £300 per annum out of Tyrconnell's forfeited estates. In the Ulster Inquisitions (County Donegal) we find that she had " fifteen quarters of land called Tyressel, near Kilmacrenan, as a jointure during life." And so she passes out of the *Saga*. As for her supposed daughter, her story is so incredible in some respects that it seems safer to leave the whole telling of it to Abbé MacGeoghegan—prefacing it with one significant fact. We find in the Franciscan MSS. now in Merchants' Quay, Dublin, a document in Spanish dated 1630 signed

[1] Meehan, " Fate and Fortunes," pp. 15, 154.

by Hugh O'Donnell, Earl of Tyrconnell, addressed to Luke Wadding, giving notice that a woman *representing herself as his sister* was going about defaming him and his house.

"The King [James I of England] being informed of the circumstances [of the Countess of Tyrconnell] though he had persecuted the earl of Tirconnel, wished to honour the father in the person of the child, and having taken her under his royal protection, commanded that she should be called Mary Stuart, instead of Mary O'Donnell which was her real name.

"The earl of Tirconnel having died at Rome, the countess his wife, obtained permission of the court to return to Ireland with her daughter. This virtuous mother took care to give her child a Christian education, and had her well instructed in the religion of her ancestors. She often represented to her that the misfortunes which arose to her father were produced by his attachment to that religion for which the grandeur of this world must be sacrificed. Mary was twelve years old when she was invited to England by her grandmother, the Countess of Kildare, who presented her to the king. This monarch gave her a large sum, intended as her marriage portion, and the countess of Kildare who was very rich, made her heiress to her fortune, so that the protection of the king towards the young princess, her illustrious birth, and her brilliant fortune, caused many noblemen in England of the first distinction to seek her in marriage. Among those who sought the hand of Mary, there was one who had been particularly attentive, and had applied to her relation and guardian, the countess of Kildare; but his being of the reformed religion, made a deep impression upon the mind of the young princess, and estranged her affections from him. Finding herself persecuted by the countess and her other relations in favour of an alliance which she thought incompatible with her honour and religion, this

illustrious heroine formed the noble resolution to escape from them, and an unexpected occurrence favoured her design.

"A violent persecution was in progress against the Catholics of Ireland. O'Doherty was up in arms to defend them ;[1] some Catholic leaders who were suspected of being concerned, were arrested and brought prisoners to England to prevent them from joining the cause of O'Doherty. Constantine O'Donnell and Hugh O'Rourke, relatives of Mary Stuart, were of the number. In spite of their keepers these two noblemen escaped, and found means to get over to Flanders. Suspicions were immediately set afloat that Mary Stuart was assisting in effecting the escape of her friends, a nobleman at court informed her that the only mode of safety for her, was to marry one of those who professed the religion of the State and also to conform to it herself, as this alone would satisfy the king and her grandmother the countess of Kildare. After this Mary was summoned before the Council to account for her conduct.

"Mary saw now that it was time to provide for her safety. She communicated her intentions to a young Catholic lady, who was her companion and attendant, and on whose fidelity and prudence she could confide. Her purpose was to go to Flanders to seek her brother the young Earl of Tirconnel, who was at the court of Isabella, the infanta of Spain, by whom the Low Countries were then governed, and by whom an asylum was afforded to all who were persecuted for their religion. Being obliged to change her apparel, in order to conceal her sex, Mary procured the clothes necessary for herself and the young lady who was to accompany her ; she then took the name of Rodolphos Huntly, her companion that of James

[1] If this refers, as it seems to, to the O'Doherty rising of 1608 the girl was scarcely a year old at the time !

Hues [Hughes ?] and their servant they called Richard Stratsi, by which names they were known during their voyage.

"Everything being prepared, and horses provided, they set out from London before day, and after many adventures, as related by the author of this account,[1] Mary and her companions sailed from Bristol; after a long and dangerous voyage they arrived at Rochelle; where being refreshed from her fatigues, she continued her journey through Paris to Brussels, at which place she met her brother, who presented her to the infanta, who received her with all possible marks of distinction.[2] The report of the intrepid conduct of Mary Stuart was soon spread throughout Europe; she was compared to Euphrosine of Alexandria, Aldegonde and other Christian virgins of antiquity; and Urban VIII, who was then pope, addressed to her the following letter:—

"'Urban VIII, to our dear daughter in Christ, Mary Stuart, Irishwoman, sister to the Count of Tirconnell, health and the Apostolic Benediction:

"'The sacrilegious mouth must be at length silenced, which has dared to affirm that the inspirations of Christianity enervate the soul, and check the emotions of the heart. You, our dear daughter, have given to the world a proof of the contrary, and have shown what strength and courage are imparted by the true faith, how superior to all dangers, and to the very efforts of hell itself. This

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[1] The account was written in Spanish by Dom Albert Henriques, and printed at Brussels.

[2] Fr. Brendan Jennings, O.F.M., has kindly sent me a copy of a letter he found in the Brussels Archives in which the Archduchess commands the Abbess of the Benedictines at Gemp, near Louvain, to receive as paying guests, Mary Stuart, Sister of the Count of Tyrconnell, with two maids, and two serving men (July, 1627). Five years later we find Mary in Rome married to a man called O'Gallagher, and appealing to Cardinal Barbarini for help as she was very poor. She had apparently been found out.

heroic courage is worthy of the protection of Rome, and the praises which fame confers. Your horrors of an alliance with a Protestant have been nobly displayed, and resemble that terror which an apprehension of fire produces. The allurements of a court and menaces of its sovereign have tended only to excite your abhorrence for both. The sea, and its accompanying terrors, have produced no obstacle to your flight, the honour of which is more glorious than a triumph, even though mountains were overwhelmed and buried in the deep, your confidence in the mercies of the Lord would be still unshaken, that being your native land where religion sits triumphant. You have succeeded in escaping from the persecution of English inquisitors, and protected by angels you have been preserved from every accident throughout your journey; accompanied by our paternal regards, you have arrived at the court of the infanta, where religion hath received you into its bosom. We therefore implore the Lord who has been your support, to reward you as your virtues have merited. We write with a hope of dispelling the remembrance of the fatigue and suffering, which are worthy to be envied, since they have earned for you a crown of glory. Receive our most tender benedictions, and as you have abandoned both relatives and country in obedience to a love for Jesus Christ, and us, receive also our assurance, that instead of exile you have found a mother that loves you tenderly—you yourself know that such is the name and character of the Roman Church. She will cherish you as her worthy daughter who do honour to the British Isles. Given at St. Peter's, under the Fisherman's Ring, on the 13th February, 1627; the fourth year of our pontifical.'" [1]

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[1] Abbé MacGeoghegan's "History of Ireland" (Kelly's Translation), p. 556, *et seq.*

If the brief of Pope Urban is genuine, and it is accepted as such by O'Donovan and MacGeoghegan, it only proves how audaciously successful was the fraud of "Mary Stuart." This "posthumous" daughter of Ruairi O'Donnell, this martyr of fidelity to her friends and the Catholic religion, was on the face of it an adventuress, whose story could not stand the examination of anyone however slightly acquainted with Irish affairs—and there is every reason to suppose that she was not only an adventuress but a secret service agent in English pay, sent to the Continent to work mischief among the Irish refugees there.

Ruairi O'Donnell did leave a daughter by his wife, Brigid, but her name was Elizabeth, and she married, as his first wife, Luke Plunkett, Earl of Fingall.

Poor Brigid herself lived to reach a great age, and to witness and be involved in the immense tragedy which overwhelmed Gall and Gael alike in the triumph of Cromwell. The last glimpse we catch of her is in that sad procession, which Mr. Prendergast conjures up for us, of wretched folk under sentence of transplantation to Connacht, petitioning the Commissioners to transmute their sentence. Among the "applications for dispensation" we find one from "Nicholas Barnwell of Turvey, and Brigid his wife, Countess of Tirconnel, in regard of their great age and infirmity of body." [1]

. . . . .

The third lady of the party, to whom the *Four Masters* give the honour of mention, is Lady Rosa O'Doherty,[2] wife of Cathbar O'Donnell, who afterwards married Owen Roe O'Neill, and was destined to return to Ireland

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[1] Prendergast's "Cromwellian Settlement," p. 41.
[2] Taylor's "Life of Owen Roe O'Neill."

some thirty-five years after she had left it. She must have been very young—about fourteen—when she married Cathbar, for her epitaph in St. Anthony's, Louvain, indicates that she was born in 1590—so that she was only seventeen at the time of the "Flight," at which period she was already the mother of two children, of whom the elder, Aodh, was two years and three months old. Lady Rosa and her husband, on the occasion of the "Flight," joined O'Neill's party, as it passed their home at Ballindrait. But her elder son was with his fosterers and were it not for the promptitude of Ruairi might have been left behind to share the sorrowful fate of his younger brother and poor young Con O'Neill. Writing to Salisbury under date September 12, 1607, Sir John Davies reports: "The Earl of Tyrconnell sent for the foster-father of his brother Caffar O'Donnell's son, willing him to bring the child with him towards the place where the Earls lodged, but being met by the way by the Baron of Dungannon and Caffar O'Donnell himself, they took the infant violently from him, which terrified the foster-father, so that he escaped by the swiftness of his horse, their horses being tired with travelling. Of this child they have a blind and superstitious prophecy, because he was born with six toes upon one foot; for they affirm that one of their saints of Tyrconnell hath prophesied that when such a one being of the sept of O'Donnell, shall be born, he shall drive all the Englishmen out of Ireland."[1]

After the death of Cathbar in Rome in 1608 Lady Rosa appears to have returned to Louvain, where she had a pension from the King of Spain and here at a date not mentioned she married Owen Roe O'Neill, then a distinguished officer in the "Irish Legion" of the Archdukes. A large family of sturdy boys, Henry and Brian

[1] Quoted in Meehan's "Fate and Fortunes," p. 98.

and Con and John, grew up with their step-brother Aodh, in the house in Brussels, where Colonel Owen—Don Eugenio—had his headquarters. That house was soon recognised as the headquarters of something else—"the heart and centre of the whole Irish movement." And in the years of waiting for "the Day" Lady Rosa played a prominent part—binding to the cause her husband stood for, by her gracious personality, the most opposed interests. She was, amongst her other gifts, a good Irish scholar and an autograph letter of hers in the native language is preserved among the Franciscan MSS. in Merchants' Quay. It would appear that Luke Wadding was not altogether satisfied with her discretion, and he calls his correspondent Fr. de Burgo to task, on one occasion, when some political secret not meant for her, had leaked out.

Shortly after Owen Roe's return to Ireland, Lady Rosa and their eldest son, Henry joined him there. They landed at Wexford from the frigate of Don Antonio, which Owen had sent back from Doe Castle to carry them tidings of his landing. Owen was in Kilkenny at the time for his first interview with the General Assembly, and his wife and son met him there and returned with him to Ulster. The General's headquarters were ultimately fixed near Belturbet, and so we must assume that here Lady Rosa spent the most of her time during the eight years she was to pass in Ireland.

After the death of her great husband at Cloughoughter, upon St. Leonard's Day, 1649, Lady Rosa returned to Brussels. "That lofty and tragic figure, fit peer and helpmate of the 'majestic stately stainless cavalier,' comes once into view when her nephew, Black Hugh, asked in 1650 for a safe-conduct for 'my aunt the Lady of General Owen O'Neill.'" Ten years later she died in Brussels, and was buried in the Convent of St. Anthony at Louvain. The following epitaph was written on the

tomb where she sleeps with her first-born, probably by the hand of one of the Irish Franciscans :—

D. O. M.

Excellentissima. Domina. Rosa. O'Dogharty
Dynastarum. Inisoniae. Filia. Et. Soror.
Alti. Sanguinis. Decus.
Morum Temperantia. Et. Splendidis. Conjugiis. Auxit.
Primum. Nupta. Inclyto. Heroi.
D. Caffarro. O'Donnello.
Tirconnalliae. Principis. Germano.
Dein. Excellentissimo. Domino. Eugenio. O Neillo.
Catholici. In. Ultonia. Exercitus.
Archistratego.
Utramque. Fortunam. Experta. Et. Miseriam. Rata.
Coelum. Studuit. Benefactis. Mereri.
Septuaginta. Major. Denata.
Bruxellis. I. Novembris. Anno. MDCLX.
Suo. Cum. Primogenito. Hugone. O'Donnello.
Praestolatur. Hic. Carnis. Resurrectionem.

. . . . .

From the correspondence recently published by Mgr. Hagan, in *Archivium Hibernicum,* it becomes sorrowfully evident to us that there was no great welcome anywhere in Europe, among their late Allies, for the exiled Irish lords. The ladies of the party, therefore, must have had many a snub, and many an indignity to endure ; and their lot in exile cannot have been very happy. But for the rank and file who had to leave Ireland in thousands there was worse than snubs and cold welcomes, as we learn from some curious records of the Parliament of Brittany, and the City of Nantes, unearthed by Rev. A. Walsh, O.S.A., and published by him in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (Vol. for 1897). They refer to a time after the conclusion of the " Fifteen Years War " for Irish Liberty, when France " was crowded with poor Irish

begging from door to door." Fr. Meehan quotes from Martin's *Histoire de France*: "Un grand nombre d' Irlandais se refugièrent en France. On voyait ces pauvres gens errer par toute la France avec leurs femmes et leurs enfants."

This is how the City of Nantes received the poor exiles: "As regards the Irish who are at present roaming about (*vagans*) in great numbers in this city and its suburbs, and whom it is proposed to get rid of, said assembly [*i.e.*, the city council] has determined in order to free the town from this sort of folk, and avoid the danger of epidemics, that they shall be summarily dispatched in some ship at the town's expense to whatever places the town council shall appoint. And for this purpose the expenditure of a sum not exceeding eight or nine hundred livres is hereby authorised."

As for the Breton Parliament its own historian has indicated the treatment it accorded to Irish refugees. "It began to hunt them down like rogues and vagabonds." For its action, inspired obviously by the desire to curry favour with England, it alleges the most ridiculous pretext. "They [*i.e.*, the Irish] over-run the whole country side, committing all kinds of devastation, so that the said country people not being able to content them, are constrained to abandon their houses, which might lead not only to the destruction and loss of property, but a great spread of disease."

In the next great dispersal of the Irish race the people of Nantes showed themselves more hospitable. We read of some nuns, "eight religious of the reformed order of St. Elizabeth," driven from Ireland by the Cromwellians, and charitably received by a certain pious widow called de Novic, "in her house in this city of Nantes, rue de Verdun." They had as their interpreter a little orphaned Irish girl of fourteen called Catherine Roche, who had been living in Nantes since she was ten. "Said Catherine

has neither father nor mother and came to this country four years ago from Ireland of which she is a native. She lived for a considerable time with her deceased mother in Rue des Capucins, and her said mother died about a fortnight before the arrival of the said nuns."

The lonely figure of orphaned Catherine left friendless and alone in a strange land moves us profoundly. But what was her fate compared to the terrible fate which was even then being prepared for thousands of other Irish girls and their widowed and destitute mothers? Immured as we are to tragedy we have to steel our souls before we can dare to read of the awful scenes when the Bristol slave-traders let loose their agents on our land to seize its pure women for the sugar planters of the Barbadoes. Children were kidnapped as they came from school, women were trapped in lonely places, carried off to the private prisons of the men-snatchers and then shipped to the West Indies. The story of Daniel Connery, a Clare gentleman, and his daughters must have been typical of many others. "This gentleman [who had been sentenced to banishment for harbouring a priest] had a wife and twelve children. His wife fell sick, and died in poverty. Three of his daughters, most beautiful girls, were transported to the West Indies, to an island called Barbadoes; and there, if they are alive, they are in miserable slavery." Thus writes an eye-witness, Morison, in his *Threnodia Hiberno-Catholica*, published at Innsbrück in 1659.

Another contemporary account published by Cardinal Moran in his *Spicelegium Ossoriense* (vol. ii, p. 130) brings before our eyes the heart-rending scenes that occurred at the Irish ports as ship after ship weighed anchor and set sail with its load of misery—one laden with Irish soldiers leaving for ever their native land to serve as cannon-fodder in the armies of foreign princes; another laden with priests and high born youths and maidens to

be borne off to slavery in the "American Islands." The description was written, it is plain, after the writer had witnessed such an embarkation, and with the tumult of emotions it had engendered still raging in his breast. Thus it comes, that as we read his words we seem to hear the same wild cries of sorrow that wrung his heart as he saw "husband torn from wife, father from son, the mother from her daughter, brother from brother, sister from sister, kinsman from kinsman," all natural ties, even the most sacred, being impiously rent asunder. Here we can see, as he saw, "the sons of nobles, the hope and consolation of their parents' old age, gently nurtured and brought up in all good knowledge and noble behaviour, now deprived not only of their right to their ancestral inheritances, but even stripped of their costly garments, clothed in rags, their comely bodies a mass of wounds and blood after inhuman floggings, being herded into the vessels like so many sheep." And here we are made to look upon "high-born Catholic maidens, piously, chastely, religiously brought up in their father's homes, on the eve of contracting suitable marriages, deprived of parents and all their great and splendid possessions, almost naked and sending up heart-rending cries to heaven as they were borne to the ships." "There were spouses most loving, who had lost their sons—one killed in the war, another dead of hardship, a third driven from his country to beg his bread in a foreign land or serve as a soldier in a foreign army—in fine all dead, or scattered." Such a desolate pair had cherished the hope that by paying a big rent they might have been allowed to live on in their own old home, "no condition being too hard so that they shall be left together." But alas! they, too, were violently evicted from their ancestral castles and while the wife was cast into some prison in Ireland, the husband was borne off to slavery in the West Indies. "Amidst all this English barbarism, nothing," says the

writer, ." seemed more heart-rending than the wailing of husband and wife, who bound together in long-standing bonds of mutual conjugal love, exclaimed that they would bear cheerfully any hardship, any affliction so long as they should be left together."

With the Wild Geese

IT is curiously enough to that extremely anti-Irish writer, Lord Macaulay, that we owe the classic description of the scene, which in all the sad panorama of our country's sorrows stands out as amongst the most heart-rending. The time is after the second siege of Limerick, the place is the port of Cork where the Irish soldiers who had elected to follow Sarsfield to France, were on the eve of embarkation :—

"Cork and its neighbourhood were filled with the kindred of those who were going abroad. Great numbers of women, many of them leading, carrying, suckling their infants, covered all the roads which led to the port of embarkation. The Irish General, apprehensive of the effect which the entreaties and lamentations of these poor creatures could not fail to produce, put forth a proclamation, in which he assured his soldiers that they should be permitted to carry their wives and families to France. . . After the soldiers had embarked, room was found for the families of many. But still there remained on the water-side a great multitude, clamouring piteously to be taken on board. As the last boats put off there was a rush into the surf. Some women caught hold of the ropes, were dragged out of their depths, clung till their fingers were cut through, and perished in the waves. The ships began to move. A wild and terrible wail arose from the

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[1] *Authorities :* O'Callaghan's "Irish Brigade in the Service of France"; De Burgo's "Hibernia Dominicana"; O'Heyne's "Irish Dominicans"; "Narrative of the Detention, Liberation and Marriage of Maria Clementina Stuart," edited by Sir John T. Gilbert; *Vie de la mère Térèse de Saint-Augustin, Madame Louise de France*; *Par une religieuse*; O'Donovan's Appendix to the *Four Masters*.

shore, and excited unwonted compassion in hearts steeled by hatred of the Irish race and of the Romish faith. Even the stern Cromwellian, now at length after a desperate struggle of three years, left the undisputed lord of the blood-stained and devastated island, could not hear unmoved that bitter cry, in which was poured forth all the rage and all the sorrow of a conquered nation."

Long did that "bitter cry, in which was poured forth all the rage and all the sorrow" of Ireland resound in the ears of her exiled sons. "In after times," writes Mitchel—his own passionate heart throbbing to its echoes —"when those Irish soldiers were in the armies of France, and saw before them the red ranks of King William's soldiery, that long, terrible shriek rung in their ears and made their hearts like fire and their nerves like steel. We know that when their officers sought to rouse their ardour for a charge, no recital of the wrongs their country had endured could kindle so fierce a flame of vengeful passion as the mention of 'the women's parting cry.'"

So those poor women, ere they turned away from the quayside, with that wail still rending the winter sky, and sought whatever refuge the softened hearts of their enemies afforded them, until the kindly mother earth was ready to receive them, had, though they knew it not, the compensation of having done more to avenge the wrongs of their land, and to stiffen Irish resistance during the terrible eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, than human estimates can make reckoning of.

Hardly less tragic than the fate of the women left behind was the fate of the women for whom room was found in the departing ships. A little paragraph from a letter of James II's Queen, Mary Beatrice, to one of her friends, a nun at the Visitation Convent, Chaillot, throws a grim light on the life of misery they were forced to endure, when their husbands and bread-winners were

slain in the French wars. And slain they were in their thousands—nobody trying to spare them.

"The town [St. Germain-en-Laye where James and his queen resided] is full of Irish, who are poverty itself; 20,000 came into France, and of those only 6,000 effective are left, *but their wives and their children remain on our hands*; as soon as it became known that my dowry was to be paid other Irish prepared to come to France, but I told Mr. Diccinson to notify to them *that those who came would receive nothing.*"

It has been stated by the Abbé MacGeoghegan—and his statement is based on researches made at the French Foreign Office—that 450,000 Irishmen died in the French service between 1691, the date of the treaty of Limerick, and 1745, the year of Fontenoy. One cannot speculate, without a feeling of despair, on what became of their wives and children left destitute in a foreign land! "The graves in which they are buried are unknown."

Even the story of those whose "graves are known" is sad enough. Take Honora de Burgo, for instance. Which of us with Irish blood in our veins can hear her name unmoved, or fail to seek eagerly the meagre details about her which history has gathered up. The wife of Patrick Sarsfield, she ranks with Pamela, the wife of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, with Matilda Tone, with Sarah Curran, as one of the heroines of Irish romance. Her father William, seventh Earl of Clanricarde, had after the death of his first wife, Letitia Shirley, an English lady, allied himself with a daughter of the noblest house in Munster, Helena MacCarthy, daughter of the Earl of Clancarty, and by her had four children: two sons, Lord Thomas and Lord Ulick, and two daughters, Lady Margaret (who married first, Brian Magennis, Viscount Iveagh, and after his death, Colonel Thomas Butler of Kilcash), and Lady Honora, whose story we are now telling.

In later days Lady Honora was pronounced by no less a critic than Saint-Simon as one of the most beautiful and fascinating women of her time. "Une très aimable femme, belle, touchante et faite à peindre," is his description of her, and he speaks with conviction of the success her loveliness and charm won at the Courts of Versailles and St. Germain. To hold her own with the brilliant women who shone like stars in the firmament of which Louis XIV was the sun—le Roi-Soleil—our Irish lady must have been well and carefully educated. It was no "wild Irish girl" who stood thus triumphantly the test of being measured against women like Madame de Maintenon, and Madame de Sévigné, and the exquisite Duchess of Burgundy, not to speak of the beauties of St. Germain: Mlle. de Melfort, and

> "La fraîche et brillante Middleton
> Que l'amour prenait pour l'aurore."

The question of how and where she was educated becomes of interest. It appears likely that she and her sister, Margaret, were among the pupils of the Benedictine Convent in Channel Row, Dublin, which that energetic Irish daughter of St. Benedict, Dame Mary Joseph Ryan, established under the patronage of Archbishop Patrick Russell, and under the invocation of St. Brigid in 1685. In one of the letters addressed by Dr. Russell to the Abbess Caryll of Dunkirk, during the unpleasant controversy, to which Lady Tyrconnell's action in setting up a rival Benedictine establishment in Ship Street had given rise, his Grace writes: "as regards what has been written against Madam Ryan, it is only a pure effect of calumny, as it is clear that Madam Clanricked would not entrust the education of her daughters to her, if she did not esteem her." Not only the Countess of Clanrickarde but the rest of the "first nobility of the country" sent their girls to Madam Ryan, and that

fact, as the lady herself pointed out, was a sufficient justification of her character, abilities and conduct. "Certainly," she argues, "their Parents would not permit them to lose their time and spend their money, if the education which I give them did not reply to their expectations, and I would not be protected as I am if I did not do the nation service."

If Lady Margaret and Lady Honora are typical of the girls educated under Dame Ryan's auspices, the good nun had no need to fear complaints from their parents "of losing their time and spending their money."

Other influences must have been potent in their formation. Not far from their father's castle at Athenry was the famous Dominican Abbey of Athenry, of which many of her relatives the de Burgos, were distinguished members. A great number of the Fathers mentioned by O'Heyne, (as well as O'Heyne himself) they must have known intimately. They were all men of great eminence and had made their studies brilliantly abroad, so that the culture they represented was something more than merely professional and provincial. Chief among these were Fr. Oliver de Burgo, O.P., who had made his studies in Spain and filled important ecclesiastical offices both on the Continent and in Ireland, "a man well versed in sacred and profane history and very prudent in business matters." Banished to France under the Cromwellians, he had been received at Paris into the intimate circles of the banished Charles II. The restoration of that monarch led to his own return to Ireland. O'Heyne tells us that when Fr. Oliver presented himself to Charles in London, the king gave him "abundant travelling expenses and a safe conduct to dwell freely wherever he wished in the kingdom of Ireland as long as he lived, whatever persecution might arise." When the news of his arrival in Dublin reached Lady Honora's father, William, Earl of Clanrickarde, "who was a great friend

of this father, he at once sent horses and the necessary equipage for him to Dublin, sixty miles distant, to bring him to his own house, with whom he lived for some years a well cared-for and honoured guest." He seems to have died in the Clanrickarde household.

Another member of the household in Honora's childhood was Fr. Teig O'Daly, O.P., "who in his fourteenth year received the habit at Athenry, and having made his profession, went to Spain and devoted himself commendably to his studies there. He was an adept in the Gregorian chant; his voice was strong and very sweet; he preached the Word of God with energy and eloquence, and he was dear to all being very exemplary and of mild disposition. For several years he lived in the house of William de Burgo, earl of Clanricarde as his confessor."

Though he did not actually live under the roof with them, a third eminent Dominican was a near enough neighbour of theirs to be often visited by Earl William's little daughters. This was their kinsman, Dr. Dominick de Burgo, Bishop of Elphin. During a period he lived on a large farm which O'Heyne, who knew him well, and went about with him a good deal, tells us he rented from "his near relative, William de Burgo, earl of Clanricarde." "He greatly improved this farm with buildings, fences and the judicious planting of trees, and by means of it was able to live observing the laws of kind and liberal hospitality, according to the primitive custom of the Church, as long as there was any cessation from the storm of persecution." It is pleasant to think of his girl cousins partaking from time to time of this hospitality, and being taken by the kind Bishop to see his "improvements" on the farm, his new buildings, and new fences and new plantations, and having him tell of the adventures of his boyhood, when he had been captured by the enemy at sea as he was on his way to

Spain to make his studies, and effected a wonderful escape from prison. He could tell them, too, of the years he spent in Spain and Italy, and above all of his experiences after his return to Ireland as bishop, during the storm of persecution, which led to the martyrdom of the Primate, Oliver Plunkett. A price was set on his own head and during many months he could only journey forth at night. "For four months," says O'Heyne, "he lay so closely hid in a solitary house that he did not even once take a step outside the door; but on the approach of Maunday Thursday, on which he had to consecrate the holy oils, he forthwith started on a journey of forty miles, travelling always by night. I was his sole companion all that year."

When this was the sort of company they mixed with in their girlhood, it is not surprising that Lady Honora could hold her own, in later days, in culture and dignity and charm of manner with the most fascinating women in France, and that Lady Margaret—better known as Lady Iveagh of Kilcash—was the delight of the poets.

In 1687 their father acted as Lord Justice, and this year was spent by his family in Dublin. Shortly after the arrival of King James in Ireland the two girls met their fates: Lady Margaret married Brian Magennis, Viscount Iveagh, Colonel of a regiment of foot in the Irish army, and Lady Honora married the gallant Patrick Sarsfield, afterwards Earl of Lucan.

During the three years that follow, Lady Honora's history is merged in the general history of Ireland, in which the chivalrous and dashing exploits of her husband stand out against a background of disaster.

. . . . .

When Lord Lucan died of wounds received in the Battle of Landen (1592) leaving Lady Honora a young widow with two children, she remained at the Court of St. Germain-en-Laye where Louis XIV had provided a

retreat for James II and Queen Mary Beatrice. Here after three years of widowhood, she married (1595) the Duke of Berwick, son of James II and Arabella Churchill, whom she had known since the days of his Irish campaigns. Many tributes have been paid to that great soldier. Even the cynical regent, the Duke of Orleans, was moved to say of him: "If ever there was a perfectly honest man in the world, it was the Marshall Duke of Berwick." And Montesquieu, whose intimate friend he was, has written: "I have seen from afar in the works of Plutarch what great men *were*; in Marshall Berwick I have seen what they are."

So we must conclude that Honora was happy in her second marriage—a conclusion which is strengthened by the evidence of the fatherly love the Duke bestowed on her children by her first husband. But already the call of another lover "more swift than he, more strong," was sounding in her ears. She fell into bad health after the birth of a son to the Duke, and never rallied. The end came in early 1698 in a little town called Pezenas in Languedoc where the Duke had his Government. Her remains were temporarily interred in the Church of the Fathers of the Oratory in that place, and were subsequently transferred to rest in the little Church of the English Benedictine nuns in Pontoise, near Paris, where at least two of the Sisters whom she had known in Dublin, were still living: Dame Margaret Markham, and Dame Laurence Lawson. And "although" (to adapt a little the words of the Four Masters concerning Hugh O'Neill) "she died far from Athenry, the burial place of her ancestors it was a token that God was pleased with her life that He permitted her a no worse burial place" than the cloister of her own Benedictine teachers, and allowed a member of the beloved Dominican Order, to which her family had been bound by so many mutual ties, to write her epitaph. Fr. Gelasius MacMahon, O.P., ex-Provincial

of the Irish Dominicans, composed for her tomb the following beautiful lines :

Perspice quisquis ades, memorique ex Marmore disce
Gemma sub hoc Tumulo quam pretiosa jacet.
Inclyta Stirpe Ducum, Regalis Sanguinis Auctrix,
Lecta Ducis Conjux, Principe digna Parens.
Clanrickard Natam, Ormond et Clancartiae Neptem,
Berwici Dominam, plorat Ierna Nurum.
Integritas, Virtus florensque Modestia Morum,
Gaudia sunt Caelo, caetera Luctus habet.
Pontis Sacra Domus commissum Pignus honora,
Mortua demeritas poscit Honora Vices.

. . . . .

Lady Honora is a representative of the *haute noblesse* of the Ireland of her time. What sort were the women of the rank and file who accompanied to France the men who sailed there in Sarsfield's wake ? One woman, who played an important *rôle* in a romantic episode of the period, will answer in person that question.

When Charles Wogan of Rathcoffey determined to free from her imprisonment at Innsbrück, the young Polish Princess, Clementina, whom he had chosen as a bride for his master, James III, he found himself obliged to employ in the desperate enterprise not only the three gallant Irish officers of Dillon's Regiment, Major Gaydon and Captains Misset and O'Toole, but two women—one to chaperone the Princess in her flight to Italy, and the other to be left in her place in the Castle of Innsbrück. For the former *rôle* which required not only those social qualities—good breeding and charm of manner—which qualify ladies for the intimacy of Princesses, but also extraordinary courage, he chose Madame Misset, the wife of Captain Misset of Dillon's, and daughter of Captain Gilagh of the same regiment. For the latter, his choice fell on the Misset's maid, Janneton. Contemporary accounts speak of Madame Misset's suitability for the

part. One describes her as "a gentlewoman of Irish birth and extraction, but bred in France—young, of a sprightly turn of wit, and a conversation so engaging as could not fail to make her an acceptable companion to the princess." Friar Bonaventure Boylan of St. Anthony's, Louvain, writes of "the comeliness of her person, and the agreeableness of her mien, her discretion, the sweetness of her disposition, and the solidity of her judgment." Passionately devoted to her husband, when she heard he was committed to the enterprise, she surmounted all the fears inspired by her natural delicacy of constitution, then aggravated by her condition—for she was expecting to become a mother in a few months—and answered sweetly to Wogan's urging: "what would not one do for one's king and queen and an adored husband; I am ready to face any danger for their service." There were long traditions of Irish valour and loyalty vibrant in that brave reply.

We get an interesting glimpse in Wogan's own narrative of life in an Irish regiment in a French garrison town. Nearly all the officers were related by blood, and a certain feeling of home life was made possible by the presence of their wives and families, who lived in lodgings in town. In Schlesestadt the Governor gave an "assembly" twice a week when there were cards and dancing, and plenty of good conversation, so that their social life left little to be desired. Madame Misset had not only her mother near her, but had been fortunate enough to secure the services—and devotion—of a fine strapping maid, one Janneton whose father had been a grenadier, and mother a *vivandière*, and who had inherited from the paternal side a gift for unparliamentary language. To have made Janneton so devoted to her is no less tribute to her charming and attractive personality than the affection with which she inspired the Princess at first sight.

The story of the rescue of Clementina from the hands of her disloyal cousin, the Emperor Charles, by four obscure Irish officers has been so often told that we need not repeat it here. It must be sufficient for us to glance at the episodes in which Madame Misset's character is brought out. Wogan relates that as the little party approached Innsbrück, though each one knew that the failure of the enterprise in which they were engaged meant death at the hands of the public executioner, no thoughts of aught but the glory of success filled their hearts. And the gayest and most spirited of the party was Madame Misset. "All this day," writes the Chevalier, "she was of a surprising gaiety. She amused herself constantly by relating to Wogan and Major Gaydon the high feats of arms and extraordinary adventures of some heroines of romance, at which she laughed herself and made the other two laugh by the witty turns she gave to them." We find her full of resource and delicate feminine skill and tenderness to meet all the little Princess's needs. When Wogan arrived at the inn in Innsbrück with the rescued Clementina, wet to the skin by the storm of sleet and rain through which she had passed, there was Madame Misset ready with warm dry clothing from her own dainty possessions, and ready with deft and tender fingers to wipe the poor little feet, and make the Princess's *toilette* with the speed demanded. She had *eau de Carmes* for her, when Clementina, exhausted by the emotions and fatigues of the night, fainted at the top of the Brenner Pass. She knew, according to Major Gaydon, how to make wine soup to perfection, and her culinary skill was called upon more than once when the Princess found it impossible to eat the food provided in the wretched inns. Nor was she less skilled with the needle, as we learn from the incidents related by Major Gaydon.

Though the historic episode in which Madame Misset figured ended happily, as a romance should, by the marriage

of the beautiful Princess to her Prince, the end of Madame Misset's own story is melancholy enough. Three days after James and Clementina were married (September 2, 1719) Madame Misset's child was born. He must have paid the penalty of his mother's devotion, for we hear no word of him in the sorrowful after years which Wogan's narrative marshals before us. Towards the end of December, 1719, Wogan and Misset went to Spain, where they were made Colonels in the army of his Catholic Majesty. After a time Misset was appointed Governor of Oran in North Africa, and in this post he died in 1733. In 1745, when Wogan (then Governor of La Mancha) wrote his account of the "Enterprise of Innsbrück" for Marie Leczinska, Queen of France (a relative of Clementina) there remained of "the little band of adventurers" but himself and Madame Misset. She was then passing "her sad widowhood" in Barcelona, the faithful Janneton, who had joined her in Rome (after escaping from Innsbrück) and come with her to Spain, having died in that city two years previously. Of what became of her afterwards I can find no record—"and the grave in which she is buried is unknown."

It would appear that many of the daughters of the Irish officers in foreign service became nuns, and a certain circumstance makes us familiar with some of these. In the year 1770, Madame Louise de France, daughter of Louis XV, astonished all Europe by becoming a Carmelite nun. "That fierce light which beats upon a throne" falls for a moment on the gates of the Carmel of St. Denis as they open to receive the Princess, and discloses among those who await her there many Irish sisters. Dr. Plunkett, then a professor in the Irish College, Paris (afterwards Bishop of Meath) writing home to the famous Fr. Betagh about the event records how "this kingdom [of France] is edified by the illustrious sacrifice which Madame Louise de France has lately made. She has

trampled under foot all the glittering splendour of a court life, and is become a Carmelite nun of St. Denis. The superior of the convent, the mistress of the novices, in a word the whole *état major* are *Irishwomen*, and such as do honour to Ireland by their virtue, understanding and prudence." [1] Once when Louis XV, who liked to visit his daughter in her retreat, and could make himself very charming to the nuns, was entertaining the Commmunity, it occurred to him to ask each sister her family name. They were practically all Irish, and the King set them laughing gaily when he remarked, "Here I am in the midst of my Irish guards." Let us accompany his Majesty, for a moment, behind the grating and make the acquaintance of at least two of the Community at closer hand.

The Prioress, Mother Anne de Saint-Alexis, is the daughter of Matthew Creagh, an Irish gentleman attached to the suite of James II whom he had followed into exile. The French Carmelite nun, who has written the "Life of Madame Louise" has nothing to say of the part of Ireland to which Matthew Creagh belonged, but we may suppose with much probability that he was a member of the Limerick family which had given many illustrious sons to the Church (ever since the days of Primate Richard Creagh who had died after an imprisonment of twenty years filled with incredible sufferings in the Tower of London in 1585), and to which the then Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Creagh, belonged. With such blood in her veins it is not surprising to find Marie-Anne (born at St. Germain-en-Laye in 1702) attracted early to the service of the sanctuary. We have a charming picture of the little girl, somewhat saddened one feels by the atmosphere of exile in which she was reared, serious and grave beyond her years, finding her joy in making altar linens

[1] Cogan's "Diocese of Meath," iii. p. 4.

and embroidering altar cloths, and turning instinctively for the only home she was to know to the shelter of the Cloister. After her mother's early death, her father went to Italy with James III, and wished to have his daughter follow him there, but she had already made up her mind to become a nun. Her choice wavered between an Order devoted chiefly to contemplation and prayer, and one like the *Filles de l'Ave Maria*, of extraordinary rigour and mortification. One day, as she was praying for guidance, a lady whom she had never seen before met her at the door of a church and said: "Heaven destines you for Carmel." The astonished girl took the words as the indication of God's Will for her, and in due course entered the Carmel of Pontoise. Having filled many important offices in this community, she was sent by her superiors with another Irish nun, Mère Dorothée de la Croix Dillon, in 1745, to the Monastery of St. Denis to effect its reform. The nuns of that monastery it would appear, had been infected by the errors of Jansenism.

In St. Denis she was made Mistress of Novices, and the two Irish nuns soon succeeded, with God's help, in making the community entrusted to their direction a model not only of orthodoxy but of religious fervour. In 1758 Mother Anne was elected Prioress, for the first time, an office to which she was again called in 1767.

At that time the Community was desperately poor. Often the nuns had to do without even the barest necessities, and the creditors of the house were constantly threatening to seize its furniture and possessions. Once the merchant from whom they bought their wood had actually sent in the bailiff when an unexpected gift of money from a charitable friend of the house saved the situation. In this extremity Mère St. Alexis had a Novena made by the Community to the Sacred Heart of Mary asking of that maternal heart to send them a postulant who in addition to a solid vocation should have a "dot"

sufficiently big to pay the debts of the House, put it on a sound financial footing for the future, and effect the repair of the Church which was falling into ruin. A lay-sister, on hearing the objects of the Novena expounded, exclaimed: "Nothing less than a royal princess will be equal to all that." And a royal princess, with a royal dowry, was sent. On the very day the Novena concluded, King Louis wrote to Madame Louise giving her his consent to enter any Convent she pleased. By a strange chance the priest whom she consulted as to her final selection of a community was M. Bertin, the Superior of the Carmel at St. Denis; and the picture he painted of the misery of the house did not a little to fix her choice.

The discourse pronounced by Mère St. Alexis on the occasion of the profession of her royal novice has been preserved, and is a model of eloquence—dignified and restrained, but touched with heartfelt emotion and gratitude towards God. This Irishwoman knew how to get great effects out of the language of Bossuet and Bourdalone. To her Irish origin also she owed, one feels, her admirable behaviour towards the royalties with whom she was brought in contact. There was in it an Irish note of independence, which was not without its uses. Her nuns looked on her as a saint. Very hard on herself, much given to penance and mortification and long vigils before the Blessed Sacrament, very exact in the observance of all the rules, she was full of tender thoughtfulness for the weak and suffering among her daughters. She would steal out of her cell of a winter's night carrying her own blanket to some poor little nun whom she thought particularly sensitive to the cold. She knew how to comfort them in all their interior trials, and had a special gift for bringing consolation to the dying.

Another Irish nun with whom Madame Louise was brought into special contact was Mère Julie de Jésus,

née Julia MacMahon. Her mother, the widow of an Irish officer in the French service, had been left by the early death of her husband, in very poor circumstances with two children, a boy and a girl, to provide for. Julia was received into a sort of "Irish orphanage" kept by the Dames de Saint Thomas at St. Germain-en-Laye, to the foundation of which the Pope, and Queen Mary Beatrice, as well as the King of France, had contributed. Her vocation for Carmel was said to originate from one day in her school days when she succoured a poor woman in a fit, whom all the rest of her girl comrades had abandoned, scared to death by the awful appearance of the sufferer. Before she was fifteen she announced to her mother that she was about to become a Carmelite. Poor Madame MacMahon was broken-hearted, and her grief at losing her daughter was all the more intense because her son had been recently killed at the Battle of Laffeldt. But the Irish mother made the sacrifice.

Though naturally quick tempered and high spirited, Soeur Julienne became in her new life such a model of gentleness, unselfishness and patience that she became known as "Soeur Commode." Her courteous and tactful nature signalled her out for the task of guiding Madame Louise's first steps in the religious life. It was no easy task that of transforming into a perfect Carmelite a princess of the blood royal; but Julia MacMahon was ideally fitted for it—and she accomplished it in such a way as to win the undying affection of Madame Louise. Some amusing anecdotes which have survived indicate the extent of our countrywoman's responsibility. Madame Louise had, of course, as a royal lady, brought up amidst the strict etiquette of the old French Court, never been allowed to do the slightest thing for herself. At first Soeur Julienne had to act as a sort of lady's maid and gentleman usher combined, until Madame could get accustomed to leave rooms without the support of some-

body's arm, or do her own *toilette*. But in truth the royal novice was so anxious to become " a true Carmelite " that she quickly got rid of the defects induced by her training, and the efforts of her " angel," as Soeur Julienne was called, were needed rather to restrain her zeal and indiscretion. There is a famous story of the Princess, while yet a postulant, presenting hersslf in the kitchen to help the lay-sisters to scrub saucepans, dressed in a rose-coloured taffeta morning wrapper. She selected a particularly dirty pan, and devoted most of her efforts to the outside, with the result that the rose-coloured taffeta got blacker and blacker, while the saucepan, much to the Princess's dismay, got no brighter !

It is pleasant to know that Madame Louise, who dearly loved her Irish " angel," was able to arrange that poor Madame MacMahon, Soeur Julie's widowed and lonely mother, was able to spend the last years of her life in the town of St. Denis, so as to be near her daughter. She had another consolation, the poor exiled lady, for the doctor who attended the Monastery was a countryman of her own, one Dr. O'Reilly.

Soeur Julienne was prioress at the time of the suppression of the religious houses of the Low Countries, when Madame Louise offered an asylum to the expelled Carmelites in France. In one of her letters to a Belgian Carmelite she sketches a portrait of " Notre Mère " : " tall, oval-faced, with eyes of Irish grey, a clever nose, good teeth." " Elle a l'air tout ensemble irlandais et flamand. Elle paraît froide, mais prend le coeur aussitôt qu'elle vous parle par un air, franc, simple, spirituel."

. . . . . .

It would appear that the Irish officers in foreign service often came home for a wife. A very pretty romance of one of them is related by Mrs. Morgan John O'Connell in her entertaining book, " The Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade." A Kerry officer in the Austrian service, named

Major O'Sullivan, came home to Ireland with the intention of seeking the hand of one of the O'Connell girls of Derrynane (aunts of the famous "Dan."). His choice fell on Nancy, who was very young and dazzlingly pretty. But alas! to Nancy's youthful eyes, a scar on his face which her suitor had carried home from a battle where he had been dangerously wounded, was a blemish rendering his appearance mighty little to her taste. Major O'Sullivan was conscious of this, and with rare chivalry abstained from asking her hand formally of her mother until he satisfied himself that Nancy considered his scarred face no insurmountable obstacle to her reciprocating his affection. He begged another of the sisters, Gobnait, to find out for him definitely, for he was afraid old Maur Ni Dhuv might *make* Nancy marry him, if he asked for her, and he did not want an unwilling bride. "Nancy expressed marked disapproval of the scarred soldier; but in conveying her message back, Gobnait, the ambassadress, betrayed a certain agitation which led him to believe that she herself did not entertain a similar objection. He satisfied himself on the point, and then made a formal demand for her hand."

Gobnait, therefore, in the words of her sister Eibhlin Dubh's famous "Dirge of Art O'Leary," "crossed the wide ocean to dwell in the courts of kings." Dressed in the fashion of courts with her freckles hidden by the paint and powder which Austrian ladies used lavishly, she looked very charming, and won the heart of the Empress Maria Theresa, who stood godmother for her first child. A letter from Daniel O'Connell dated 1766 gives cheerful news of the Major and his bride. "He and Gobby are well. He assures me she is vastly well pleased with the Military way of living, and already begins to learn the German tongue." Alas! poor Gobby was not to need the "German tongue" very long. She and all her children perished in an epidemic of smallpox before she

had completed her twenty-sixth year. Her husband never married again.

The Empress Maria Theresa seems to have been very fond of the Irish girls about her court. The O'Donnell Correspondence published by O'Donovan in an Appendix to his edition of the *Four Masters* (iii. 2416 *et seq.*) shows her taking a great interest in the love affairs of one of them. The girl in question bore the name of Theresa, and was probably the Empress's god-daughter. She was a daughter of Count John O'Donnell of Larkfield, and was early affianced to her kinsman General Manus O'Donnell—who was very rich, but old enough to be her father. While General Manus was in Ireland attending to his affairs in preparation for the marriage, a young cousin of his intended bride's, Joseph son of Count Henry O'Donnell, came to Vienna to attend the *Chancellerie* "to make himself fit for employment in that part of Poland our Court has acquired of late." He lived in the house of his uncle, Count John, and there he met the charming Theresa, who was then in a convent in Vienna expecting the return from Ireland of her elderly *fiancé*. A letter of her father's to General Manus tells the story: "These two young people saw one another sometimes in my house when I had her to dinner now and then. They took a mutual liking to each other, without letting me know it other than by their looks and countenances, which I observed, and questioning the girl, her confusion and tears explained her sentiments." There did not seem to be much hope for the young people ever marrying. For the girl had no fortune and was engaged to another; while young Joseph's father had already several advantageous matches in view for his son. But the Empress, who did not like to see her beautiful *protégée* wedded to an old man, intervened with some effect, and Theresa married Joseph and became through her son Maurice the ancestress of the O'Donnells of Austria who still flourish.

Women Poets and Poets' Women

"WHERE there is woman, *there* will be love; and where there is love *there* will be poetry." If the proverb-maker had not been, after the manner of his kind, short-sighted and misogynist, *there* was a proverb ready to his hand with far more of truth and conviction in it than the ridiculous one he did make connecting women with cows on the one side, and fighting on the other.[1]

Since there have been women and love from the beginning among the Gaels, it follows there has been the poetry that results from them. Whether as "the maker" or poet, herself, or "the cause that poetry was in others," the connection between Woman and Poetry in Ireland is as old as the race itself.

In the most ancient days of all, the poetic gifts of women would seem to have been regarded as part of that mystic equipment with which the reverence of the men of Eire endowed them. Some chord in them, yet attune to the immortal harmonies to which the unseen world moves, stirred in them, as some air from the sphere of the spirits breathed over it, and there came from their lips strange prophesyings and melodious laments—in which the men of to-day recognise the very

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Authorities: "Liadain and Curithir" (edited by Kuno Meyer); O'Curry's "Lectures on Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History"; Sigerson's "Bards of the Gael and Gall"; Hyde's "Love Songs of Connacht"; Mrs. M. J. O'Connell's "Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade"; "Poems of Carolan" (edited by Prof. T. O'Máille).

[1] "Where there is a cow there will be a woman, and where there is a woman there will be fighting."

essence of that indefinable thing they call great poetry. We catch its echo, in what has been gathered up of the Song of Deirdre looking back on Alba, and of her Visions as she travelled sorrowfully " over the seas and the wide plains " towards the tragedy of Emain Macha, and of her great " Lamentation for the Sons of Usnach." We hear it in the sad lays of Fionnuala ; in the hymns of St. Ita ; in the voice of " Emer of the sweet words " as she held the head of her dead husband to her breast, and made her moan for the passing of its bright beauty :

" And then she said : ' It is long that it was showed to me in a vision of the night, that Cuchulain would fall by the men of Ireland, and it appeared to me Dundealgan to be falling to the ground, and his shield to be split from lip to border, and his sword and his spears broken in the middle, and I saw Conall doing deeds of death before me, and myself and yourself in the one death. And oh ! my love,' she said, ' we were often in one another's company, and it was happy for us for if the world had been searched from the rising of the sun to sunset, the like would never have been found in one place of the Black Sainglain and the Grey of Macha, and Laeg the chariot-driver, and myself and Cuchulain.' " [1]

. . . . .

It is not, however, only as an instrument of a music, and a sorrow, and a wisdom outside herself, that the Woman Poet of ancient Ireland is revealed. It is said that " poets are born not made " ; but having been born they need a special training, in most instances, before the world recognises them. In the old days in our own country, this training was very extended, and elaborate. There is proof that women sometimes shared it with men ; and indeed the case of Emer herself is on record to establish that training in " the secret language of the

[1] Lady Gregory's " Cuchulain of Muirthemne," p. 346.

poets" was part of a girl's education. It will be remembered that when Cuchulainn came to woo her, he and she conversed in a poet-speech full of strange mythological and historical allusions—and it was her skill in it that helped to fix his choice of her for a bride, "for I have not hitherto found," said he, "a maiden capable of holding converse with me in this wise." A poem published by O'Curry in his *Manuscript Materials*, and ascribed to the Princess Ailbhé, daughter of Cormac Mac Airt, proves her to have been a successful student of the same science, and may be looked upon as a specimen of the exercises set in the ancient Irish school of poetry.

From these schools proceeded these professional poetesses of whom we have an interesting example in the person of Liadain, the heroine of that strange old love-tale *Liadain and Curithir*, which Kuno Meyer, its first editor and translator, ascribes to the ninth century. The story, which has only come down as a fragment, is not easy to understand, but Kuno Meyer has sketched it in suffic ently intelligible outline:

"Liadain of Corkaguiney, a poetess, went visiting into the country of Connacht. There Curithir, himself a poet, made a feast for her. 'Why should not we two wed?' said Curithir. 'Do not let us do so now,' said Liadain, 'lest my round of visiting be ruined for me. If you will come for me again at my home, I shall go with you.' That fell so. Southward he went, and a single gillie behind him with his poet's dress in a bag upon his back, while Curithir himself was in poor garb. There were spear-heads in the bag also. He went till he was at the well beside Liadain's court. There he took his crimson dress about him, and the heads were put upon their shafts, and he stood brandishing them.

"Meanwhile Liadain had made a vow of chastity; but faithful to her word she went with him. They proceed to the monastery of Clonfert, where they put them-

selves under the spiritual direction of Cummin the Tall, son of Fiachna." At last Curithir is banished by Cummin, and goes as a pilgrim beyond the seas. Liadain remains at home as a penitent—and when her sad life ended, Cummin laid the stone, on which she had done penance, over her grave. The poetry put in her mouth is very mournful and sweet:

"I am Liadan
Who loved Curithir
It is true as they say.

. . . . .

The music of the forest
Would sing to me when with Curithir,
Together with the voice of the purple sea."

. . . . .

Strangely enough in the songs ascribed to Liadain, professional poetess as she was, there is nothing of the poetry of the schools, and still less of the inspiration of the seers. We hear in those sad strains only the voice of a poor lovelorn girl easing the sorrows of her heart in song. Liadain is of that sweet-voiced melancholy choir of maidens unhappy in love whose songs Dr. Hyde has gathered up in the "Love Songs of Connacht."

It was to ease her sad heart that Queen Gormlaith made those "many pitiful and learned ditties in Irish" to which the translator of the "Annals of Clonmacnoise" refers in his quaint phraseology. Her romantic story has been told by O'Curry in his "Manuscript Materials." [1]

Princess Gormlaith, the daughter of King Flann, had been betrothed in her very early girlhood to Cormac MacCulenain, King of Munster. The marriage, however, never took place as Cormac found he had a vocation for the priesthood, and took holy orders. The princess was

[1] Lecture VI, pp. 132–135.

then married, very much against her will, to Cearbhall, King of Leinster.

Shortly afterwards King Flann and his son-in-law, King Cearbhall, declared war on Munster. A battle was fought at Ballymoon near Carlow, in which the King-Bishop Cormac was defeated and slain.

In that battle Cearbhall was severely wounded, and when he was borne back to his palace at Naas, Gormlaith, in whom the sense of wifely duty was very strong, nursed him carefully, and was very seldom absent from his couch. One day as she sat on the foot-rail of the bed, Cearbhall began to discuss the battle, and described with much exultation and in horrible detail, the vengeance he had wreaked on the lifeless body of his slain enemy, Cormac. Gormlaith uttered an indignant protest against such a desecration ; and Cearbhall, in a sudden fit of rage kicked her off the foot of the bed in the presence of all her ladies and attendants.

Gormlaith, mortified at the insult, fled home to her father. But as Flann needed Cearbhall's help to combat the Danish peril, he did not dare to quarrel openly with his son-in-law, and sent his daughter back to her husband.

The story of Gormlaith's ill-treatment came to the ears of a chivalrous young cousin of hers, Prince Niall Glundubh, son of the King of Aileach, and he determined to avenge it. He gathered all the forces of the North, and marched against Leinster. In the end, Cearbhall was forced to grant Gormlaith a legal separation, restore her dowry, and give her the royal residences he had settled on her at her marriage. When these arrangements were made, Gormlaith returned to her father.

The following year Cearbhall was killed in a battle against the Danes, and Gormlaith, now free, became the wife of her champion, Niall Glundubh, to whom she bore a son, Prince Domnhall.

After the death of Flann, Niall was chosen High King,

and proved himself one of the bravest and best kings that ever ruled our land. His battles against the Danes were innumerable, and in most of them he was victorious; but at last in a great battle near Dublin his army was defeated, and he, himself, slain. He was succeeded as High King by Gormlaith's brother, Donnchadh.

After her brother's death, Gormlaith, whose little son had been previously drowned during his fosterage in a place near Galway, fell into great poverty, and according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise,* even had "to beg her bread from door to door, forsaken of all her friends and allies, and glad to be relieved of her inferiors." The manner of her death, as recorded by the same annalist, is very touching:

"Gormphly, daughter of King Flann, and queen of Ireland, died of a tedious and grievous wound, which happened in this manner: she dreamed that she saw King Niall Glunduffe; whereupon she got up and sate in her bed to behold him, whom he for anger would forsake, and leave the chamber; and as he was departing in that angry motion (as she thought) she gave a snatch after him, thinking to have taken him by the mantle, to keep him with her, and fell upon the bed-stick of her bed, that it pierced her breast even to her very heart, which received no cure until she died thereof."

It was during her long and painful illness that she composed, according to O'Curry, the poems which have come down to us. In one of these she gives an account of her life and misfortunes. "She details the death of her son, who was accidentally drowned in Galway during his fosterage, and the subsequent death of her husband; and in it is also preserved an interesting account of her mode of living; a sketch of the more fortunate part of her life; a character of Niall, of Cearbhall, and of Cormac; a description of the place and mode of sepulture of Niall; and on the whole, a greater varietv of references to habits,

customs, and manners than I have found in any other piece of its kind." [1]

The best known of Queen Gormlaith's "pittiful ditties" is her *Dirge* over King Niall, which Dr. Sigerson has translated [2] from the *Dean of Lismore's Book*. It begins:

"Move, O Monk, thy feet away,
Lift it now from Niall's side,
Over much thou'st cast the clay
Where I would with him abide."

It is by a beautiful *Dirge* for her husband Cael that the Princess Créde is best remembered. This *Dirge* has also been translated, by Dr. Sigerson, to whom we owe the following account of it:—

"When the great battle of Ventry Harbour, famed in Irish romance, was over, Créde and other gentle and simple women of Erin went over the shoreward region seeking the bodies of their husbands on the field of slaughter. Whilst still searching, Créde observed a heron risking her own life to defend her two younglings against a fierce fox. 'No wonder I should love my gentle comrade,' she said, 'when a bird is in such anguish over its birds.' Then she heard the stag on the mountain over the bay, belling lamentably from pass to pass, for his dead hind. They had dwelt in the forest nine years together, and now, for nineteen days, he had touched neither grass nor water mourning her loss. 'No shame for me to find death through grief for Cael," said Créde, 'when the stag is shortening his life for a hind.' Then she met Fergus on the battle-field, and asked had he tidings of Cael for her. 'I have,' answered Fergus, 'for he and the chief of the household of the King of the World (the invader)

[1] "MS. Materials," Lect. VI, p. 135. The poems attributed to Queen Gormlaith have been published by Professor O. J. Bergin in "Miscellany presented to Kuno Meyer."

[2] "Bards of the Gael and Gall," p. 179.

have drowned each other.' 'Little the need for me to bewail Cael and the Clanna Baiscne, for the birds and the billows do strongly bewail them.' She sang his death-song, and when it was ended, the soul of Créde parted from her body for grief of Cael, the son of Crimtann. Her grave was made over Ventry, a stone was raised above her tomb, and her funeral games were celebrated."[1]

So often during the long centuries of her oppression did the "birds and the billows strongly bewail" the deaths of the men of Eire, that her women, finally, above all the other women of the world, became experts in that sad music. The *bean-chaointe* was down to our own day a striking figure in Irish life; and her "laments," full of an ancient sorrow, wedded to a music as old and sad as the world itself, seem improvised from the very heart of the race.

One of the greatest poems in any language is "The Dirge of Art O'Leary," composed by his wife, Eibhlin Dubh Ní Chonaill, on the occasion of his tragic death.[2]

"Dark Eileen," as her English-speaking descendants call her, was the sixth daughter of Donal Mór O'Connell of Derrynane, and his notable wife Maur-ni-Dhuiv (grandparents of the famous "Dan.") When she was yet a child, having not completed her fifteenth year, she was wedded by her matchmaking mother to an elderly suitor of great wealth, one Mr. O'Connor of Firies. It is related that when the girl-bride was being "hauled home," by the shouting, cheering crowd usual on such occasions, and was actually being lifted over the threshold, the strings of a harp which hung in the hall, suddenly snapped.

But the grief, thus prognosticated for her, was not that she felt when, six months after her marriage, her old husband died. Its time was yet to come.

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[1] *Op. cit.* Appendix, p. 405.

[2] Text and translation in "The Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade," i. 239–40; ii. 327–40.

One day, some years after, as she was in Macroom on a visit with her sister Mary, married to James Baldwin, she looked out from the window of the house, to the market place and saw a stately young cavalier ride by on a dark-brown steed with a white star on its forehead. It was Art O'Leary on his famous horse.

A gallant sight they were to see, peerless steed and "snowy-handed rider." "Well your beaver did become you, with the golden band around it, the fine laced beaver cocked in three; well your silver hilted, slender sword became you—your jewelled brooch fastened in the cambric ruffle. Well your riding garb became you—the five ribbed stocking, the fine small shoe of foreign fashion, and broad cloth woven beyond the sea."

The dark eyed lady at the window looked down, and the blue-eyed rider in the market place looked up. And in that first meeting of their eyes, their hearts and souls met also:

"Mo ghrádh go daingean tu!
Lá dá bfeaca tú
Ag ceann tighe an mharcaigh,
Tús mo fhuil aime dhuit,
Tús mo chroidhe taitneamh duit."

But though Eibhlin was a widow, and presumably mistress of her own person and property, her family refused to consent to the marriage of the lovers, and they eloped. The refusal of the O'Connells was due not to any want of means or defect of birth on Art's part but to the peculiar circumstances in which he found himself.

He was a young officer in the Austrian service, who had returned to Ireland to take up a rich property which he had inherited. A great lover and judge of horses, he had in his stables a wonderful racehorse which excited the covetousness of a Protestant neighbour called Morris. It will be remembered that the Penal Laws forbade any

"Papist" to have a horse of greater value than £5. Morris offered the £5 to O'Leary, and the latter, in passionate indignation, struck him, and challenged him to a duel. Morris refused to fight, but invoked the aid of the Penal Code and had O'Leary "outlawed." It was his "outlawry" that prevented the prudent O'Connells from favouring his suit.

So "dark Eibhlin" ran away with him; and, as she tells us herself, in verses that give a vivid idea of life among the Irish gentlefolk of the period, "never did she rue the day."

"I found chambers gay with tinted hangings, parlours brightly decked for me. Beeves were slaughtered, spits revolving, loaves fresh-kneaded, ovens heated, red wine flowing from the cask for me. I might sleep on downy pillows, past the morning till the noontide, past the time the maids went milking, did I will it so." It is likely that she seldom willed to sleep so long for like a *châtelaine* of mediaeval times, the duties laid upon her by the hospitality her husband dispensed at Raleigh, their home near Macroom, were exceedingly heavy. O'Leary was passionately devoted to hunting. He was, in Eibhlin's words, "the hunter unsurpassed who would speed from distant Grenagh—While his fleet grey-hounds lagged outstripped behind." Bound by ties of blood or fosterage to the noblest families in the land, he loved to invite them to a meet of the hounds, and a great banquet afterwards:

"O my beloved, the light of my soul, kinsman of the brave and noble company, whose headlong charge at the hunt was wont to shake the valleys and the hillsides! Many a time you led them homewards, where a hearty welcome met them. Knives were whetted, joints dismembered, streaky flitches set before them, and sides of mutton where no bones were seen. Full-grained oats, meet food for hunters, filled the mangers to o'erflowing.

Crested steeds and grooms to tend them might tarry 'mid plenty while their masters stayed. These were as brothers among friends."

But not the pleasures of the chase and banquet only brought these kinsmen and foster brethren to Raleigh. On one occasion the place was actually besieged by the Government troops, instigated by Morris. The garrison within beat off the soldiery, Eibhlin, it is said, loading the guns for her husband.

So five happy years passed; and two beautiful boys, "little Conor and Fiach Og, were playing in their dwelling," while Eibhlin was about to become a mother for the third time. During these years the enmity of Morris never relaxed, and Eibhlin never saw her husband ride forth from Raleigh, without a dread of the dangers which awaited him outside. He made light of her fears, but to quiet her, he wore constantly a shirt of mail she gave him. When she, herself, was by any chance absent from home her dreams were haunted by visions of impending disaster :—

"O my loved one! O my darling! an awesome vision came to me in sleep as I slept alone in Cork, within the city's bounds. I thought I saw the Gerah wither, as though some raging fire had swept across its trees. The fair house where we dwelt beside it crumbled to the ground. Your swift hound was struck dumb, the song birds all turned voiceless, and you lay dead in the dreary mountain-side. I thought you lay there stiff and stark and lifele s. There was neither priest nor cleric near you, only an aged crone who flung her mantle's ample folds across your breast. O! Art O'Leary, then I saw you; there was blood in heavy clotted masses on your garments. And it had flowed from out your breast."

Too soon the vision became a reality! On a bright May morning of the year 1773, Art O'Leary rode forth from Raleigh for the last time :—

"When you passed out of the gate, you turned quickly back, you kissed your children once again, and smiling, kissed your hand to me. You said, 'Arise, Eileen; be quick and set all gear in order with all your care and skill. I go from home this day; perhance I shall never return.' I thought he spoke the words in playful jesting, as he had often jested thus with me before."

That night a strange knocking came to the bolted door of Raleigh. "Dark Eileen" rushed to it, and flung it open, and there striking the heavy wood with her hoofs stood Art's famous dark-brown "peerless steed"—riderless, with "long reins trailing in the dust, and your heart's blood on her forehead. Blood-splashed the splendid saddle, too, where you were wont to sit."

On that blood-stained saddle Eibhlin threw herself, and the mare with the distracted lady upon her, flew like an arrow through the summer night:—

"I made but one bound to the threshold; I made but one bound to the gate; I gained the saddle in one bound more. With clapping hands and cries I urged her onward; at utmost speed the good mare flew;—Nor paused till where you lay, till where I found you dead before my eyes. There was neither pope nor bishop, there was neither priest nor cleric, to chant the holy psalm above my dead;—Only an aged crone, withered and lean and grey, who spread her mantle's ample folds above you, my love!"

Eibhlin's poetic gift was also shared by her sister Alice (married to John Seggerson, Ballinskelligs), who composed a beautiful "Lament" for their mother, Máire Ni Dhuibh. She had been long a widow at the time, and she sends w th her mother to the dead husband of her youth, the tidings of her constant love and unending sorrow:—

"Mother of my heart! If ye meet the good man of my house
Tell him since the day he left me
I have found no pleasure in anything;

No music raised my heart.
Forgive me for bringing down any grief but yours ;
But tell him I find no pleasure in anything
But his child.
Since the voice of my wailing
Will not reach the good man of my house,
Who left me long years ago,
Tell him, mother of my heart;
That I have been ever true to him ;
And when re-united to the first born of your youth
Tell him also his Mary has never changed her name,
Nor the sable colour of her garments." [1]

It was from the mother, Máire Ni Dhuibh, whose death was thus mourned, that the sisters inherited their poetry. She herself was of the " Dark Donoghues of the Glen," and had been early married to Donal Mór O Connell of Derrynane, to whom she bore twenty-two children. If all Máire Ni Dhuibh's poetry were gathered up, we should probably be able to reconstruct by its means the life she lived, at the head of " her multitude of followers and fosterers " in the " fine slated house " her tall husband had built for her at Derrynane. Now we find her summoning in verse her maids to the spinning, anon exchanging poetic repartees with an unsatisfied tenant, and poetic riddles with another rhyming lady, and, most striking scene of all, standing by the seashore like a figure of Eire, the mourning mother, bidding farewell to her children forced to leave her to seek their bread in the ranks of foreign armies :—

" To your barque, brave boys, haste !
In our haven's deep strait is a sail !
On through the shallows, and o'er the watery waste
For France with my blessing on the gale !
. . . . . .

[1] This is a reference to Mary Falvey, who had married Máire Ni Dhuibh's eldest son John, and was left a very young widow after her husband's early death.

Let me weep for we meet not again
Never ship bore a goodlier freight—
Twice nine noble scions of the soldier of Spain.
. . . . . .
My blessing, then, will follow ye with the radiant sun,
And my fervent prayers when dark night reigns." [1]
. . . . . .

The eighteenth century was rich in women-poets; but the names of only a few have come down to us. Máire Ni Dhonnegáin, a famous *bean chaointe* of her day, has left a beautiful elegy on her brother. Máire Ni Laoghaire, known also as Máire Bhuidhe or Máire Bourke, is the author of several poems, of which two: "Cois abhann gleanna i n Uibh Laoghaire do bhíos-sa," and "Tá gaedhil bhocht cráidhte céasta cásmhar," have been published in the *Gaelic Journal*. Mary Mac Alindon (Máire Nic Giolla Fhionntain) sister (or daughter) of "the Fews" poet, Patrick Mac Alindon, is according to some account "the Mary" of the duologue "Teig and Mary," published in Dr. Hyde's "Love Songs of Connacht," and the heroine of the following pretty story:—

"Tadhg O'Dornin, the poet, was travelling through Erin, and came to the house of Mac Alindon. Mac Alindon was a *Biatach* or hospitaller; that is one who kept open house, giving food and shelter gratis to those who went that way. O'Dornin went in, and after the repast, a harp was placed in his hands, as was customary in the country at that time to see if he wished to make music. Nobody in the house knew O'Dornin, and there was great wonderment on them when he began to draw from his harp the sweetest music at all. That made Mac Alindon's sister jealous, for she was herself a queen harpist. She said that there was no man went by that way for a long time was able to make music like that, and after a long conversation with him she challenged him

[1] "Last Colonel of the Irish Brigade," i. 11, 68; ii. 202.

to play the harp against herself, and the people of the house listening to them as judges. O'Dornin began, and on the moment composed and played certain half stanzas extempore, and she answered him in the same way, and the same metre." [1]

Mary Mac Alindon may have been, as the story maintains, the "queen harpist" of her day. But there were other women harpers in the eighteenth century, whose names have come down to us. In the very curious "Memoirs of Arthur O'Neill," the celebrated harpist, we hear much of a certain Rose Mooney, a blind harper from county Meath, and her maid Mary. Rose had been taught by Thady Elliott and had acquired such proficiency on her chosen instrument that she won prizes three times running at the celebrated "Granard Balls" in the eighties of the eighteenth century, where all the most famous harpers of the period competed for prizes offered by a patriotic Irish merchant called Dungan, then resident in Copenhagen. She was present at the "Harpers' Festival in Belfast" in 1792, where Bunting got some airs from her. Other professional women harpers mentioned by O'Neill were Kate Martin, and his own pupil, Biddy Reilly.[2]

In addition to the women poets of the eighteenth century, whose names have reached us, there must have been hundreds of women of whom we know nothing except their songs—and they are as lasting as music, and love and sorrow themselves. "It is women," writes Dr. Hyde,[3] "who made many of the love-songs, and melodious and sorrowful they made them. In what language will we find the real out-pouring of a sorrowful heart, sweeter and more melancholy than the song which some maiden composed who gave her love to a man who

[1] "Love Songs of Connacht," p. 89.
[2] "Annals of the Irish Harpers," pp. 137–201.
[3] "Love Songs of Connacht," pp. 3–5.

did not understand it. The girl's name, and the occasion on which she made this poem, and everything else about it, is unknown, except that the poem is here. That is the way with three-fourths and more of the poems in this book [*i.e.* "The Love Songs of Connacht"]; there remains nothing of the people who composed them in grief and tribulation except the songs.

"A tune is more lasting than the voice of the birds,
A word is more lasting than the riches of the world."

The poem to which Dr. Hyde referred is the exquisite love-song beginning :—

"If I were to go west, it is from the west I would not come."

But what he says of that song and the unknown girl, who first composed and sang it, is true of many other songs in his beautiful book. We shall never know whose broken heart eased itself in the sorrowful "Mala an tSleíbhe Ruadh," or "an Tuirse a's an Brón so," or "Mo Bhrón air an Bhfairrge," or "A Ogánaig an Chúil Cheangailte" with its exquisite love-imagery :

"And I thought, my storeen,—That you were the sun and the moon—And I thought after that,—That you were snow on the mountain—And I thought after that—That you were a lamp from God—Or that you were the star of knowledge—Going before me and after me."

. . . . .

A "maker" or poet herself, or "cause that poetry was in others"—in which *rôle* has woman "deserved better of the republic" of Irish Song?

To read Irish poetry is, as it were, to gaze "into the mirror blue" which hung before the Lady of Shallott, and to watch a splendid pageant of Irish heroines defile across its clear surface. We see tawny-haired Maeve in the midst of her armed battalions; the tragic figure of Deirdre; the proud young beauty of Emer; Brigid

amid her flocks on the green plain of Kildare; Ita and the little boy saints whom she loved to foster; the lady of the castle, not only as she appeared to the annalists—"the pillar of support and maintenance of the indigent; the heart of counsel and advice to the chiefs"—but as she looked in her charming youth. A book of courtly love poems like Mr. Tomás O'Rahilly's "Dánta Grádha" shows us "the troops of damsels glad"—whose beauty made bright the grey old castles into which they were gathered for their fosterage. One of them stops for a minute, and we see in the magic mirror all the loveliness that cast a spell upon her long-dead singer: the golden ringlets that almost touch the grass, "the slow grey eye and languid mien," "the brows thin like the stroke of a pen," "the cheeks white with scarlet through them," the little sweet mouth of the colour of a berry, the teeth like pearl, the rounded chin, the swan-like neck and bosom white, and young, and warm.

> "Pure white hand and shapely finger,
> Limbs that linger like a song;
> Music speaks in every motion
> Of my sea-mew warm and young,"

Nobody has ever had love made to her more beautifully than the Irish girl, to whatever station of life she belonged. Professor Thomas O'Rahilly's collection of love poems quoted above is there to show how Earl Gerald of Desmond, and Magnus O'Donnell Prince of Tirconaill, the Earl of Glancare and other aristocratic poets sung of the lady of their hearts. But the towns-girl and the country-girl had nothing to envy them. Mr. Henry Morris reminds us of the exquisite similes which the peasant poet found in his language to describe his dear one. He called her "his share of the world," his "sky woman," his "flower of whiteness," his "branch of beauty," "his mien of brightness," his "star of knowledge." Was ever

a girl so enchantingly wooed as "Little Mary of the Fair Hair" in the song which bears her name :—

"Beside the Breed in the west, my love is for a year.
Her likeness is as the sun of summer.
Honey grows behind her in the track of her feet in the mountain
Seven weeks after November day" (i.e., *even in the heart of winter*).

And again :—

"Her bosom—fine, handsome, white, smooth, bright,
Like a swan that would be alone upon the linn ;
And sure the cuckoo speaks in the middle of the cold winter
In the little village in which she is sporting."

What did it matter if the subtle compliment which identified the loved maiden so completely with young summer itself that the cuckoo mistook her passing for its advent, had been paid centuries ago by Cael to the Princess Créde :—

"If she grant me grace at all—
She, for whom the cuckoos call,
Then I, for thanks, will give her
More lays to live for ever."

In compensation—if such were needed—could she not reflect that the fragrance of the honey, that marked the passing of her light feet up the wintry mountain side, wafted across the sea to the English poet, was to inspire one of the loveliest verses in *Maud* :—

"From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March wind sighs,
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes."

. . . . . .

To speak of Tennyson is to conjure up a vision of gardens and trim lawns, whose *parterres* are lovely with chosen flowers of distinguished strain. How delightful it must have been for her whose name was chosen to

call those roses by: "Frau Karl Druschki," "Caroline Testout," "Madame Victor Verdier," "Catherine Mermet." But if she had lived in eighteenth century Ireland, she might have been even more fortunate: she might have had a song called after her.

This good fortune would very likely have been hers, if she had met Turlogh O'Carolan, and shown the grateful poet any kindness. Then she would have had "her name and her memory set to sweetest music" like "Mabel Kelly," or "Lady Mary Fitzgerald," or "Catherine Crofton," or "Kitty O'Hara," or "Nancy Hart," or "Gracey Nugent" or even "Brigid Cruise," or "Mary Maguire," though they are in a category apart.

Brigid Cruise was Carolan's first love—she at the touch of whose hand the yet slumbering chords of poetry and music awoke in him, finding expression in the lovely song which bears her name. Long years after, when old and blind, he made a *turas* to Lough Dearg. As he stepped from the boat a hand was stretched forth to help the sightless harper to the shore. Though withered and aged now, he knew it for the hand of the bright love of his youth.

Though "Brighid Bheusach" [1] was Carolan's earliest inspiration, and the touch of her hand in youth or age had power to waken the music in him, it was another to whom he gave the love of his manhood. A yet unwritten romance attaches itself to the name of Máire Ni Guidhir, the high-born girl who married "the blind harper," then fifty years of age, and became the mother of his seven children. Hardiman, quoting from Walker's "Memoirs of the Irish Bards," speaks of her "as a proud and extravagant dame." But it is acknowledged that the marriage was a great success, and that her husband loved her tenderly and lived harmoniously with her.

[1] "Courteous Brigid."

There must have been many difficult and lonely days in her life when her poet was away from home on one of his "bardic circuits," and she was left to bring up their children without much help from him. But she accomplished admirably the task she had undertaken, and one of the most beautiful poems Carolan ever wrote, one of the finest compliments a man ever paid to a woman, is the poem he wrote on her death in 1733.[1]

Another woman who had a great influence on Carolan's life and development was Madame Mac Dermott, of Alderford House (Ballyfarnon, Co. Roscommon). He had known her ever since his boyhood, when forced by his father's misfortunes to leave their home in Meath, the Carolan family had settled in Connacht. Madame Mac Dermott, a good type of the Irish Catholic *châtelaine* of her period, was attracted by the gentle-mannered, handsome boy and had him educated with her own children. "He learned," says Hardiman, "to read his native language which, at that time, was universally taught. He also made some proficiency in English and showed a taste for history." About his eighteenth year a great misfortune came upon him. He caught smallpox, and though he recovered from it, he lost his eyesight, and became completely blind. His kind friend, Mrs. Mac Dermott, procured a harper to instruct him, under whom he soon made proficiency. Having finally determined to adopt it as a profession, his benefactress provided him with a horse and an attendant. In his twenty-second year he began his avocation by visiting the houses of the surrounding gentry.

But to no house did he turn so eagerly as to the house of Madame Mac Dermott; nowhere, except under the roof of the O'Conors of Belangare, had his harp a sweeter music, or his soul a nobler fire. "Here he was at all

[1] "Poems of Carolan," p. 161.

times sure of a ' pipe and a chair,' and the quiet necessary for composing his best musical pieces."

And it was to Ballyfarnon whence he had first set forth on his *rôle* of harper that he made his last journey, ended his last " bardic circuit." He fell ill at Maguire's of Tempo, but would not stay there—turning rather his face to Alderford. " On reaching Ballyfarnon, after he had rested and recovered a little, he called for his harp, and played his ' Farewell to Music,' to the tears and sobs of his kind friends. . . When his death became known, a vast concourse of people from the neighbouring counties gathered in. All the house in Ballyfarnon were occupied by the gentry, and the people erected tents in the fields around Alderford House. The harp was heard in every direction. The wake lasted four days. . . Old Mrs. Mac Dermott hersel joined the female mourners who attended to weep, as she expressed herself ' over her poor gentleman, the head of all Irish music.' "

And on that final *tableau* showing the old Irish gentlewoman, as she raises the *caoine* for her dead poet, our curtain slowly descends.

The Women of the Wars

IF there has been poetry from the beginning of Irish history, there have been wars from its beginning also, and the association of Women and Wars is no less ancient than the association of Women and Song.

In the dim days beyond the dawn of history we discern half mythical shapes of women-warriors like Scathach from whom Cuchulainn and many other young captains of the Gael, like Ferdiad, and the sons of Usnach, learned "all the arts of war, and all the feats of a champion"; and Aoifé who was "the greatest woman-warrior in the world," with a knowledge of enchantment and witchcraft. Scennend, the sister of Fingall, Emer's father, was a woman warrior, and found her death at the ford, as she came up with her fighting men to stop Cuchulainn and Emer in their flight towards Emain Macha. Queen Maeve, too, according to her own account, was a great fighter. "Of the six daughters of my father, Eochaidh King of Ireland," she boasts to her husband, King Ailill, "I was the best and the one that was thought most of. As to dividing gifts and giving wages, I was the best of them, and as to battle feats and arms and fighting, I was the best of them." And again speaking of the qualifications necessary for her husband: "It would not be

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Authorities: The *Táin*; Hogan's "Description of Ireland in 1598"; O'Grady's "Catalogue"; Philip O'Sullivan's "Compendium"; "Aphorismical Discovery of Treasonable Faction" (edited by Gilbert in "Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland, 1641–52)"; "Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill"; Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland"; "Narrative of Captain Cuellar"; Prendergast's "Cromwellian Settlement."

fitting for me to be with a man that would be cowardly, for I myself go into struggles and fights and battles and gain the victory." It is said that as late as the seventh century there was in Ireland compulsory military service for women, and that their emancipation from it was secured by Adamnan at the request of his mother, in the " Law " which bears his name, the *Cáin Adamnain* or *Lex Adamnani*.

Though the Law of Adamnan set his countrywomen free from the necessity of going into battle, the sad history of their land has largely modified the fruits of this exemption. Women have always had to be fighters in Ireland—and whether as active combatants or as passive resisters, their part in the long struggle for Irish freedom has not been less important than that of their men. It is almost a truism to state that had it not been for the valiant part played, all through the centuries, by the women of Ireland our race could never have endured to the final victory.

It is not easy to disentangle, from the misty veils which legend has woven around her, the figure of Gráinne Ni Mháille, or Grace O'Malley. History tells us that she was the daughter of Owen O'Maille, chief of " the Owles." [1] The English Lord Deputy, Sir Henry Sydney, writing in 1576, of his experiences of the gentlemen of the West, describes " O'Maylle," who came to see him, in the company of MacWilliam Burke, as " strong in galleys and seamen." A later Owen O'Malley figures in the Inquisitions of 1607 as " chief of his name and nation, his ancestors having had rents of barley, butter, and money out of several lands within the barony of Murrisk . . . seisid of the Castle of Cahir-na-Mart (now Westport), the castle and island of Carrowmon in right of tanistry." O'Dugen

[1] The " two Ualls "—the baronies of Murrisk and Borrishoole (Umhall)

proclaims of them that " a good man there never was of the O'Malleys, but he was a seaman."

Of all the " good men of the O'Malleys " none was better than Gráinne, the beautiful daughter of the Chieftain, Owen, and it followed that she was " a seaman "—had been such, indeed, from the first day when, as a tiny child, she was taken aboard one of her father's galleys. Henceforth the sea was as her native element.

She was married, very young, as the Irish custom was —to O'Flaherty, chief of the sept described in the State Papers as forming with the Burkes, " the greatest nation, and possessed of the strongest country of any in Ireland." Left by his death a widow with three children (of whom the names of two, Murrogh and Donall, are mentioned in the State Papers in connection with their younger stepbrother Tibbot na Long Burke), she married MacWilliam Burke, " called by nickname," according to Lord Deputy Sydney, " Richard in Iron " (i.e. *an Iarain*, " of the iron "). Sir Henry's account of the visit to him of Gráinne and her " iron " husband is to be found in the Carew Papers :—

" There came to me also a most famous sea-captain called Grany O'Malley, and offered her services to me wheresoever I would command her, with three galleys and two hundred fighting men, either in Ireland or Scotland. She brought with her, her husband, for she is as well by sea as by land more than Mrs. Mate with him. He was of the nether Burkes, and now as I hear MacWilliam Eiter, and called by nickname, Richard in Iron. This was a notorious woman in all the coast of Ireland." [1]

Queen Elizabeth of England, who was fond of trying to make an impression on Irish ladies, invited Gráinne to London, and, at court, offered to make her a countess. The " famous sea captain " pointed out that she was a princess in her own right, and the acceptance of an

[1] " Col. Carew MSS.," ii. 533.

English title would entail a loss of status. She allowed, however, her little son, Tibbot, to be knighted by the English Queen.

A particular interest attaches to the name of Rosa O'Toole,[1] wife of the celebrated Fiach macHugh O'Byrne, "the firebrand of the mountains between Dublin and Wexford," as Sir John Perrott, who had suffered many things at his hands, somewhat ruefully calls him. Rosa was Fiach's second wife and married him some time before 1590; at the same time two of her sisters, Una and another, whose name I have not found, married two of Fiach's sons by his first wife. We are accustomed to think that these marriages planned primarily for political motives designed "to join two Clans together," are loveless transactions. But this was not the case with Una O'Toole. Long afterwards, when her husband Felim was taken prisoner and the news was brought to her that he had been condemned to death, "her heartstrings broke" with sorrow and love.

Of a different type was Rosa, though equally devoted to her valiant husband. She had a large share in the escape of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, from the Castle of Dublin; and though her plans miscarried, at his first evasion, when she had arranged for her husband to rescue him from her brother's custody at Castlekevin, they worked out perfectly on the second.

Of life at Ballinacor, Fiach Castle in Glenmalure, the poets who were frequent and welcome visitors have given many lively descriptions. Eochy O'Hosey has written:

"A house beloved is that on which now I have turned my back—populous burgh of many a white liss—mansion of fairy light: smooth, evened, noble every way—delicate rath: perfected in colour and complete. Dwelling beloved; refined, and blooming freshly, and majestic,

[1] O'Grady's "Catalogue," pp. 499-509.

to leave which I in sooth have been most loth ; a rath of gentle lissom women which [now that I am gone from it] has plunged me deep in pining sadness. Dear to me was the joyous uproar of its sons of chiefs, and dear the decoration of its bright apartments ; dear was the frolicking of its clean-built wolf-dogs, and its gay-caparisoned horses at their speed. I loved the fair white colour of its textures, with its garrison that ever plied some cunning feat ; the heavenly dulcet melody of its harps, and voice of its yellow-tubed trumpets various [with much ornament]. Dear to me were its welcome and its amenity, dear, too, the loud hum of its occupants ; with headlong trial made there of its racers, with pointing of its tough and burnished-headed spears." [1]

The poets flocking thither in blithe companies, found not only a welcome from Fiach " as he was wont to be—in the bright well-appointed mansion's centre—" but from Rosa " of the gentle eye and the skin like snow." Niall O'Roney sings of her beauty of person and mind : tall, walking with stately gait, having crimson lips and a full ' poll ' of curling hair, with a disposition that makes her the theme of poets, all over Ireland, and the especial darling of her own bards." [2] And Rory Magrath, in his lament for Fiach's death, yet opines that Ballinacor will keep its old-time reputation if Rosa but still be there.

For many a long year the doughty Fiach's *caithreim*, or battle-roll showed nothing but victories. But at length, in January, 1595, the Lord Deputy, Sir William Russell, and the English Castle forces, aided by the treachery of a MacDonnell, who was Fiach's enemy, fell upon Ballinacor by surprise. " There were within the house," says the official report of the action, " (as we understood by good espyall) Fiach himself, his wife and all his sons with Walter Reoghe [Fitzgerald, his son-in-

[1] O'Grady's " Catalogue," p. 474. [2] *Ib.* p. 502.

law] and many other of their principal followers, who we hoped would all have fallen into our hands; or at least the greatest number of them, for that we had so beset the house as we saw no reason that they should escape." Escape they did, however, whether owing to the "negligence of a capten" who was made to bear the burden of the official blame, or their own ready wit—and they all got safely away to the safety of the "glynnes," leaving only the castle to the enemy.

Here the refugees suffered many things, the enemy concentrating all his power on hemming them in straightly. In May, 1595, Sir Geoffrey Fenton reports that they were reduced to living on horsefiesh "which yet they could not have but as they could kill some wild stud [*i.e.* mare] running upon the mountains." A greater misfortune than that befell them, for Rosa was captured, taken to Dublin Castle, treated with the brutality we might expect, and subjected to the usual treatment to get from her information against her husband. On May the 25th she was tried before a jury and found guilty of treason—and on the 27th of the same month she was sentenced to be burnt to death.

The execution of the sentence was delayed because the Machiavellian [1] government hoped to make use of her, if not against her husband, against her eldest stepson, Turlough. By some diabolical contrivance she was persuaded to believe that Turlough had entered into an arrangement with the Government to betray his father. Rosa found an opportunity to warn her husband of the supposed treachery of his eldest son. Fiach, furious at the news, never dreamt of its being a government *ruse*, and he blindly sought revenge by handing over Turlough

[1] Sir William Russell openly avows himself in a letter to Burghley a follower of Machiavelli: "I will not surcease to use all the Florentine's practices, as her Majesty termeth them, to make them [*i.e.*, the Irish] cut one another's throats."

himself. "Turlough was sent in chains to Dublin," says Philip O'Sullivan, "and not only expiated his imaginary crime but shed a lustre on his entire house by his noble death, for though often pressed by the English to subscribe to the royalist sect, he preferred to die a cruel death professing the Catholic creed of Christ, than to live denying it."

At a time not specified, but probably at the period of his surrender of his eldest son, Fiach came in "on protection," and it is probable that it was at this time, or shortly after, Rosa was pardoned and released.

Fiach did not long remain quiet. In August, 1596, the State Papers report him as having "entered into open rebellion," and by surprise taken and razed the fort of Ballinacor, his own castle.

Henceforth he was "on his keeping" in the glens. In May of the following year he was betrayed by one in whom, according to O'Sullivan, "he had complete confidence and who guided the enemy to where they surprised him with a few retainers, and beheaded him."

Our last record of Rosa is in that curious document of Captain Thomas Lee's, called "the Discovery and Recovery of Ireland, with the Author's Apology." In a vehement tirade against Ormond, he speaks of his friendship for Rosa, and the *marginalia* show the official mind as endorsing his judgment of her with picturesque emphasis:

"Over and above these two great helps he [*i.e.* Ormond] hath also a third, *viz.*, Fewgh MacHugh's late wyfe [*inter lin.* the widow] Rose O'Toole whom [*in marg.* 'the ace of hartes in wickednesse'] oftentimes he graceth with the name of 'cosen'; a trustie instrument and follower of his, and by him she is maintained. She goes often to the mountains to these traitors, who are her brothers and sons-in-law [stepsons] carrying to them news and admonishing them [*in marg.* a 'trustie intelligencer'] that they ought to have a great care and to give straight

command to their men and to the strangers amongst them that they do not spoil his lands nor hurt his tenants. This I affirm for truth by the waye, that all those parts of Ireland are the worse [*in marg.* ' a note most true '] through this female favourite of his lordships, who bears himself so bold on his favours that she is not afraid (amongst those whom she supposeth anything to affect the traitor's proceedings) openly to pray [*in marg.* ' she never prayeth better '] for the good success of Tyrone and her brothers the traiterous Tooles, never praying for her majesty who did most graciously pardon her life [*in marg.* ' a pardon ill bestowed '] condemned to death for treason. If this be a fitt woman to be countenanced by a man of his place, I humbly refer it to your honourable consideration."

During its palmy days Ballinacor was a sort of martial academy to which young men were sent to be trained in arms. " How is this dwelling now within itself ? inside of which we used once to see women, and abroad before its walls young men in companies at practise of athletic sports, of shooting. From morning until evening's cloud —as though it had been a public banquet-house—there was gay uproar of lasses and of lads outside, along the rampart of the ornamental lawn that lay exposed to the [summer's] heat. There it was that we were witness of a man out of every airt in Ireland, after his having [already] for a season served in hardships of spears, [yet coming thither and] learning farther feats and martial games." [1] Among the young men who graduated from this ' academy ' and gave an extremely good account of themselves in the Great War led by Hugh O'Neill and Hugh O'Donnell, were two in particular, Owny O'More and Richard Tyrrell. Owny's mother, the wife of the

[1] Rory Magrath's " Lament for Ballinacor " after Fiach O'Byrne's death (O'Grady's " Catalogue," p. 508).

valiant Ruairi, had been killed "in action" one might almost say—and her memory deserves to be enshrined in our battle-roll of Irish heroines. The story of her death is graphically told by Philip O'Sullivan: [1]

"The chieftaincy of Leix was taken from O'More and added to the royal crown. Rotheric (Rory) son of O'More, ill-brooking this, endeavoured to recover his patrimony by arms in a fierce struggle of six years' duration. At one time making truces, and, on the expiration of these, again renewing the war. . . He had taken as prisoner of war Harrington, a privy councillor, and Alexander Cosby, Governor of Leix, both Englishmen. The English opened negociations for ransoming these, but about the same time a huntsman of Rotheric's enraged on account of a fine inflicted on him by his master, fled to the English, and arranged with them to betray Rotheric, and set Harrington and Cosby at liberty. Harpole, an Englishman, under the guidance of the huntsman, set out with two hundred soldiers against Rotheric. Rotheric had built a house in the midst of a dense and impassable wood and fortified it by a ditch, access being had by two avenues. When the huntsmen had arrived here on a stormy night, 'here,' said he, 'sleeps Rotheric with his wife, and a kinsman, named John O'More and an old man and he has Harrington and Cosby in chains; but such is his daring and valour, that lest he escape . . . spread for him this net which I usually lay for deer.' Ridiculing the advice of this man, the English block the two avenues, surround the door, and fire into the house. Rotheric, being aroused, struck with great presence of mind at Harrington and Cosby four or five times with his drawn sword. Rushing from his house he with his sword, intrepidly knocked down Harpole who was nearest the door, and although the latter was not wounded, being

[1] *Compendium*, vol. II, book iv, chapter 5.

protected by a coat of mail, yet all were struck by fear, so that the former brandishing his sword escaped unhurt through the midst of his enemies, his kinsmen following. His wife and the old man were slain by the heretics when they entered the house."

The story lights up as with a vivid flash the dark places of the lonely woods and bogs, and shows what gently-nurtured Irish ladies had to endure, in life or death, when, faithful to their lords, they went with them "on their keeping."

The womenkind of Richard Tyrrell's house were in bravery not unworthy of its men. During the Confederate Wars (1641–1653) we hear much of "oulde Captain Tyrell's" daughters. Two of them were Franciscan nuns, and when many of their sisters in religion were led astray, politically, by Friar Walsh and the Ormondists, they were staunch to Rinuccini and the "Old Irish" party led by Owen Roe O'Neill. Another of his girls was married to Dr. Owen O'Shiel—"the very best of that science in the three kingdoms," a student of Paris, and Louvain and a doctor of the University of Padua.

On one occasion, after the split between the Nuncioists and the Ormondists, General Preston who adhered to the latter, on his way to besiege Athy, "made halte" before the Castle of Woodstock which Catherine Tyrrell,[1] in the absence of her husband the doctor with his regiment, held for General O'Neill. Preston, through a trumpeter, sent Catherine a summons to surrender the castle, promising her that all her people should be received to quarter, and that she herself after the surrender would get the castle back again to live in quietly. "The gentlewoman answered that she never thought to betray the trust reposed in her by General O'Neill, in surrendering

[1] "Aphorismical Discovery," i. 254.

his castle to his enemy." Preston then asked for a promise of the surrender of the castle after the taking of Athy. This second summons received an equally uncompromising refusal. The third time, the General sent three captains, old friends of herself and her husband, to try to persuade her—" but she a most constant and generous woman will not be persuaded." Yet a fourth attempt was made on her constancy, Preston endeavouring to win her over by a kind letter penned by his own hand in which he begged her to yield, alleging his extreme care for her well-being. As he had asked her to send an answer in writing, her letter to serve as safe-conduct to the bearer, she dispatched her nephew, Hugh O'Shiel, with her final reply. " The gentlewoman penning a short and round answer, desiring him not to spare her, though never a man in the castle ; but women and such heapes of stones as is here, would never surrender the same unto the uttermost trial." Preston, furious at this bold reply, threw away all consideration of honour and threatened to hang up the messenger, young Hugh, in her very sight unless she would surrender. He had two cars drawn up on the castle lawn for the purpose to show he was in earnest. Catherine's answer came back still bolder than before : " if he proved so base and tyrannical as to execute such a man, sent as messenger from one enemy unto another, and by the consent of both, a thing so palpable against the laws of both nations and arms, she would never ransom him at so dear a rate, as thereby to become a traitor and perfidious unto him that did repose his trust in her to keep that house, nay said she, tell the General from me upon my credit I swear, if my very husband and all the children I bore him were to be hanged upon such a score, I would not hinder it, as being more tender of their good name than of their lives, as tainted with the ugly stain and character of treason and perfidy." Preston " madd angrie " was about to hang the lad—but

the wiser councils of his officers prevailed, and he compromised by marching him in fetters with his army to Athy.[1]

Other women were active combatants in the same wars. After the attack on the Convent of Bethlehem, near Athlone, which has been already described, the country-women particularly distinguished themselves in a remarkable action. The people of the district were so indignant at the outrage on the convent that they gave any "roundhead" soldiery they met a very bad time. On this account the scattered garrisons were withdrawn, or as it not unfrequently happened, deserted their outposts. About twenty-four such "musketeers" on their way to Dublin, were observed by "a young gentleman of the Dillons" who was out riding accompanied by a single follower. He hurried on to a tavern, and finding some "country neighbours" making merry there—six or seven lusty fellows that formerly "tilled the ground," called on them to attack the English soldiers. The Irish lads rushed into a house whence they emerged armed with "flails, Irish spades and other such trash," and followed by all the women, "the feminian sex" as the author of the *Aphorismical Discovery* calls them in his quaint language. Thus armed they fell upon the enemy; "the women were not idle," and the result of the encounter was that twenty-three of the English were killed, and the valiant tillers of the soil were henceforth armed with the captured muskets.

But perhaps, when all is said and done, it is by what they *endured*, rather than by the blows they dealt, that the women of Ireland have contributed to the final victory of the cause of Irish freedom. Let us try to realise something of what they were called upon to suffer in each succeeding phase of the tremendous struggle,

[1] "Aphorismical Discovery," i. 254.

and then let us resolve to make them the only return they desire—to be faithful, even as they were faithful.

We have already seen something of what our country-women had to suffer in the massacres, and artificial famines which were such a persistent feature of the enemy's campaigns of conquest. But in addition to these horrors there was a system of free quarters which must have been unspeakably galling. In the "Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill" we read of the extortions of the Danes—with "a steward in every village and a soldier in every house, so that none of the men of Erinn had power to give even the milk of his cow, nor as much as the clutch of eggs of one hen in succour or in kindness to an aged man, or to a friend, but [was forced] to preserve them for the foreign steward, or bailiff or soldier. And though there was but one milk-giving cow in the house, she durst not be milked for an infant of one night, nor for a sick person, but must be kept for the steward, or bailiff, or soldier of the foreigners. And however long he might be absent from the house, his share or his supply durst not be lessened; although there was in the house but one cow, it must be killed for the meal of one night, if the means of a supply could not be otherwise procured."

In the Elizabethan Wars the sufferings of the poor people who had soldiers "cessed" upon them were great enough to excite the compassion of Spenser himself:[1] "For the soldiers, who during their lying at cess use all kinds of outrageous disorder and villany, both towards the poor men which victual and lodge them, as also to all the country round about them, whom they abuse, oppress, spoil and afflict by all the means they can invent; for they will not only not content themselves with such victuals as their host, nor yet as the place perhaps affords, but they will have other meat provided for them,

[1] In "View of the State of Ireland."

and *aqua vitae* sent for; yea, and money besides laid at their trenchers, which if they want, then about the house they walk with the wretched poor man and his silly [*i.e.* simple] wife, who are glad to purchase their peace with anything."

The story told by Captain Cuellar, a ship-wrecked survivor of the Spanish Armada, of his experiences in Ireland presents a picture of what life must have been in war-time for so many of our countrywomen. His narrative conjures up a succession of appalling scenes: a deserted monastery, whence "the sons of life" had fled to the mountains, and where amid the wrecked altars and charred remains of statues hung the corpses of twelve Spaniards executed by the English Lutherans; an old woman of eighty escaping to the woods with her four or five cows "to save them from the English, who had come to live in her village"; a forsaken village built around a lake—very uncanny in its emptiness; the roads full of marauding English soldiers; the priests ministering to their flocks amid all kinds of privations and hardships and dangers; whole communities "on the run." But one thing stands out from all these horrors: the divine pity of the women for the wounded and hungry stranger whom the storm had cast up from the sea like a piece of wretched flotsam. Wherever he went Captain Cuellar met with this pity and kindness. The old, old woman escaping with her few cows to the fastness in the woods, her plundered home at the mercy of the enemy, had time to "grieve and much to cry" for the sufferings of the poor Spaniard; the young girl left alone with her aged father while an English and a French soldier of fortune were living at free quarters in their home, saved him from being robbed and murdered by the Englishmen, "grieved much at his ill-treatment," sent food, and plasters of healing herbs to the hiding place she had secured for him, and finally sent him under safe guidance on his way to

O'Rourke's country. At a castle where he found shelter "the women wept to see the ill-treatment he had received." In O'Cahan's town, where the girls received him very pleasantly, the woman-of-the-house he was visiting one evening helped him to get away safely from two English soldiers who were about to seize him.

So used were the countrywomen to a hard life that they survived sufferings which seem to their weaker descendants unbearable, and to their extraordinary endurance must be largely attributed our national survival. If it is not quite true to say with Dr. Sigerson that "the tempest that devastated the castle swept over the cabin," it is true that after the cabin was levelled by it, the cabin-dwellers, once the storm ceased for a moment, lost no time in re-building it. A few days' work did that.

With "the castles" it was a different matter. The storm devastated them—and we shudder to think what the gently nurtured ladies who had held sway in them were called upon to endure. A poignant scene of misery too deep for lamentation is conjured up by the story of the Duchess of Buckingham's visit to the O'Cahan castle in Limavady. "As she entered a room in the dilapidated castle, the Duchess saw an aged woman, wrapped in a blanket, and crouching over a peat fire, which filled the room with reeking smoke. After contemplating this spectacle the Duchess asked the miserable being her name; when the latter rising, and drawing herself up to her full height, replied, 'I am O'Cahan's wife.'"

If she was, as seems probable, Donald Ballagh's widow —the daughter of the great Hugh O'Neill, the betrothed of the great Hugh O'Donnell—what memories bore her company as she crouched over the smoky turf-fire seeking warmth for her aged limbs against the chill winds that whistled through the dilapidated castle! And yet, miserable as was her state, were there not women who

might have envied it to her? For, at least she sat by her own hearth—and whatever of roof remained above her head—it was her own! Even this poor consolation was denied the women who listened on a wild November day—Martinmas, 1653—to "the beat of drum and sound of trumpet" announcing the Cromwellian decree which condemned them to banishment from their ancestral homes and hereditary fields and "transplanation" to the war-wasted territory of Connacht.

As that desolate procession of the "transplanted" passes across the scene each individual turns his or her face for a moment to the camera of the official record, and so history keeps for ever the impression of each tragic countenance. Let one family group serve as a type of thousands. Here in their "transplanters' certificates" we see "Matthew Hore of Shandon, aged thirty-one, brown [hair]; middle [height]," his wife Mary, aged twenty-five, tall and fair, with their three little flaxen-haired daughters, nine-year-old Mary, four-year-old Margaret, two-year-old Brigid—and their fair sons: John, aged seven; Patrick, aged five; Martin, three. They were evidently a well-to-do young couple, for the certificate speaks of Matthew as a freeholder with "eight cows, two hundred sheep, seventy-nine garrans, five cows, forty-two acres of wheat and beans, seven of peas," and each child, from nine-year-old Mary to baby Brigid, has about half-a-dozen cattle for his or her own portion; while little Martin, though only three, has for some reason, a still larger number than any of his brothers or sisters, being able to count "ten cows, one yearling and thirty-six sheep." What a tragedy for the poor young mother to leave her comfortable home in Shandon, Co. Waterford, and with her six little children, "trek" across the country to the internment camp for the Irish nation into which Cromwell had transformed Connacht.[1]

[1] "Cromwellian Settlement," p. 244.

But, after all, Mary Hore was young and strong, and her sufferings cannot have been as great as those of women whose wretched condition is vividly rendered forth in their applications for relief from transplantation. "Margaret Barnwell had long been troubled with a shaking palsy." "Mary Archer had an aged father, who would be suddenly brought to his grave wanting his accustomed accomodation." "Margaret Cusack was seventy-eight years of age and dropsical." "Dowager Lady Louth was of great age and impotency." [1]

A case, which as Mr. Prendergast well says, illustrates the misery of Ireland, is that of the family of Viscount Roche of Fermoy.[2] His wife, Lady Roche, had been hanged in 1652 on a charge of shooting a man. The only witness against her, a woman of evil life, did not even know the name of the man whom the Viscountess was alleged to have shot; and other witnesses were able to prove that the accused lady was twenty miles away from the spot, and the sight of a pistol was enough to frighten her from the room. Nevertheless she was convicted and executed. Two years later "Lord Roche was dispossessed of his whole estate, having (as his petition sets forth) the charge of four young daughters unpreferred, to whose misery was added the loss of their mother by an unjust and illegal proceeding, for whose innocence he appealed to the best Protestant gentry and nobility of the county of Cork. Thenceforth Lord Roche and his children lived in a most disconsolate condition, destitute of all kind of subsistence (except what alms some good Christians in charity gave them) the consequence of which was that one of his daughters fell sick and died for want of requisite accomodation either for her cure or diet."

The story of three other girls of the Roches is equally

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[1] "Cromwellian Settlement," p. 39. [2] *Ib.* p. 241.

touching. Their father, Alderman Jordan Roche of Limerick, had died a very wealthy man—"seised of a vast real estate to the value of £2,000 a year, and likewise of a considerable personal property." But after his death his great possessions were divided amongst the gentlemen of Cromwell's Life Guard, and his three daughters, Christian, Anstace and Cate, were reduced to "a sad and deplorable condition for want of sustenance or maintenance, and had nothing to live on but what they earned by their needles and by washing and wringing."

. . . . . .

And now, for a time, our gleanings amid the records of Irish Womanhood must come to an end. In that great message to the "Boys and Girls" of Ireland, which will stir the hearts of generations yet unborn, as well as those to which it is directly addressed, our President has reminded them that they are "the children of a noble race and an ancient nation. . . the heirs of love and of sacrifice, the issue of generations devoted to the service of Truth and Right—of God and mankind, purified by the sufferings endured and ennobled by endurance" in whom "it is hereditary to be true, and just and noble." It has been my privilege to show that on our mothers' side our descent is no less noble than on our fathers'; that the racial heritage we claim of truth, and justice, of lofty principle, and high endeavour, has been secured to us by the sufferings and the steadfastness of the women of Ireland no less than of her men; that of the DAUGHTERS OF BANBA, as of the daughters of Job, it may be well said: "there were not found in all the earth women so beautiful . . . and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren." Heirs of "their love and sacrifice" we claim aloud, in the presence of all the nations, our right to that inheritance to-day.

Finis

INDEX

Abban, St., 41.
Adamnan, "Law" of, 249; *Vita S. Columbae*, by, 114.
Ailbhé, Princess, 230.
Ailill, King, 6.
Aille, woman's name, meaning of, 3.
Ainlé, 8.
Alba, Deirdre's farewell to, 9.
Amergin, 17.
"Amour Courtois," 16, 19.
Ancient Irish Ideal of Beauty, 2.
Andrew, St., 41.
Annals of Clonmacnoise, 231, 233.
Annals of Four Masters, 33, 74, 126, 179.
Annals of Ulster, 126.
Aodh, 26, 28, 29, 30.
Aoifé, woman warrior, 18, 248.
Aoifé, wife of King Lir, 26, 27.
Aonghus, the Culdee, 47.
Aonghus (a god), 13.
Aphorismical Discovery, 260.
"Archdukes," court of, 190.
Archduchess Clara Eugenia Isabella, 133, 198, 199.
Archer, Mary, 265.
Archivium Hibernicum, 204.
Ardan, 8.
Arthur, Miss, 86.
Arthur, Dr. Thomas, 86.
Atkinson, Mrs., "Life of Mary Aikenhead," by, 122, 123, 156, 157.
Athenry, Dominican Abbey at, 95, 213.
Athy, Margaret, 88.
Attracta, St., 42.
Augustinian Canonesses, 127.
Ball, Dame Elinor (Bermingham), 88.
Ballinacor, 251-255.
Ballyfarnon, 247, 248.
Ballymoon, Battle of, 232.
Barbadoes, Irishwomen sent as slaves to, 206.
Barckly, 63.
Barnewall, Father John, 138.
Barnewall, Margaret (transplantee), 265.
Barnewell, Nicholas, 196, 201.
Beaumont, Dame Marina, 165-167.
Bean-Chaointe, 235, 241.
Beann-Gulbain, 13, 14.
Becan, 60.
Belfast, Harpers' Festival at, 242.
"Bell of Resurrection,' 38.
Benedictine Nuns, 129, 165-169, 212.
Benen, St., 43.
Bentivoglio, Cardinal, 189.
Berwick, Duke of, 216.
Bethlehem (near Athlone), 136-139.
Biatach, MacAlindon, 241.
Binne, woman's name, meaning of, 3.
Blai, 17.
Blake, Madam Mary, 159.
Blake, Sister Clare Colet Christian, 146, 147.
Blake, Sister Julian Anthony, 148.
Blanaid (Blathnait), 23; meaning of, 1.
Bodhbh Dearg, 26.
"Bonnyclaber," 118.

Book of Lismore, 111, 113.
" Boolies," 112.
Boylan, Fr. Bonaventure, 218.
Brendan, St., mother of, 52; birth and baptism of, 53; " fostering " of, 38, 40, 53, 54.
Bricriu's Feast, 21.
" Bridge of the Cliff," 18.
Briga, mother of St. Comghall, 48-50.
Briga, sister of St. Brendan, 54.
Brigid, St., Cuimmin's description of, 32; influence of, 33; Irish prayers to, 34; birth and parentage of, 35; stories of childhood of, 36; miracles of, 36; virtues of, 37; story of, in " booly," 113; " cross " of, 35; hospital named after, in Galway, 89; Benedictine school in Dublin, placed under patronage of, 169.
Brigid, St., of Opaca, 40, 42.
Brigid, a woman's name, meaning of, 3.
Brittany, Parliament of, 204, 205.
Broichan, a druid, 114.
Broichsech, 35, 37.
Brogach, Bishop, 52.
Browne, Father John, O.P., 160.
Browne, Mother Mary Bonaventure, 133, 136-139, 150, 153.
Browne, Mother Catherine Bernard, 136, 139, 145
Browne, Sister Catherine Francis, 146.
Brude, King, 114.
Brussels, Owen Roe O'Neill at, 203; Death of Lady Rosa O'Doherty at, *ib.*
Buckingham, Duchess of, 137, 263.
Buicead, the hospitaller, 109, 110.
Bunting, 242.
Burke (de Burgo), Sister Cicely Joseph, 144, 145.
Burke, Dr. Dominick, Bishop of Elphin, 214.
Burke, *Hibernia Dominicana*, by, 130, 163, 164.
Burke, Honoria, a Dominican Tertiary, 130.
Burke, Lady Honora, wife of Patrick Sarsfield, 211, 217.
Burke, Dr. Oliver, O.P., 213.
Burke, Richard " of the Iron," 240.
Burke, Tibbot " na Long," 240.
Burke, William, 7th Earl of Clanricarde, 211, 213-215.
Butler, Dame Mary Joseph, 167.
Butler, Piers, Earl of Ormond, 70, 71.
Butler, Dame Ursula, 167, 168.

Cael, *Dirge* for, 234, 235.
Campion, 63.
Cara, mother of St. Brendan, 52, 53.
Carey, Dame Flavia, 166-168.
Carrick-on-Suir, 131.
Caryll, Dame Mary, 165.
Cathbad, 8, 18, 25.
Caulfield, Sir Toby, 180, 181.
Cavellero de Gracia, Convent of, 145, 147, 150.
Cearbhall, King of Leinster, 232, 233.
Celano, Thomas of, 39, 136.
Cethern, 4.
Chaillot, Visitation Convent of, 210.
Champion's Portion, 21.
Cheevers, Sister Martha Mariana, 132, 134, 142.
Cheevers, Brother Didacus, 142.
Chichester, 180, 181, 196.
Children, education of, 90.
Christening Feasts, 90.
Ciaran, St., of Clonmacnoise, Darerca, mother of, 55; Beoit, father of, *ib.*; brothers and sisters of, *ib.*; boyhood of, 56; Deacon Justus, tutor of, *ib.*

Cistercian Nuns, 129.
Clancy, Mother Mary Baptist, 153, 155.
Clanna Baoisgne, 14, 235.
Clanricarde, Countess of, 168.
Clare, St., *Life of* by Thomas of Celano, 39, 136; "Rule" of, translated into Irish by Michael O'Clery, strictly observed in Ireland, 150.
Clementina, Princess, escape of, 217-220.
Cogitosus, 35.
Coimgel, mother of St. Senan, 58.
Coleman, Rev. Ambrose, O.P., 162.
Colette, St., Statutes of, translated into Irish by Duald MacFirbis, 138; strictly observed in Ireland, 137, 150.
Columban, St., mother of, 57-58.
Comghall, St., birth and baptism of, 48; boyhood of, 49.
Conall Cearnach, 18; wife of, 21.
Conchobar, King, 8, 17, 23, 26.
Conn, 26, 28, 29, 36.
Connery, Daniel, story of, 206.
Connor, Mr. Ambrose, 153.
Conry, Florence, Archbishop of Armagh, 172, 189.
Conyers, Dames, 166, 167.
Cork, social customs of, 85; expulsion of inhabitants of, 105.
Cormac MacAirt, 7, 11, 13, 109.
Cormac MacCulenain, 231, 232.
Corunna, Irish exiles at, 172, 176.
Cornwallis, English Ambassador at Madrid, 194.
"Coshering," Luke Gernon's description of, 65.
Costello, Tomas Laidir, 79-81.
Creagh, Mother Anne de St. Alexis, 221-223.
Crede Princess, 234, 235.
Crilly, Miss, a nun, 156.
Cruachan, 44.
Cruise, Brigid, 246.
Cruithnechan, 51, 52.
Cruimtheris, 43.
Cuchulainn, 16-20, 107.
Cuellar, Captain, 262, 263.
Cuimmin of Connor, 32, 38.
Cumme, mother of St. Mochua, 60.
Cummin the Tall, 231.
Cusack, Margaret, 265.
Cynicism of Ancient Irish Romances, 11.

Danes, extortions of, 261.
Davis, Sir John, 180, 202.
Darerca, mother of St. Ciaran, 55-57.
Dean, Dominick, 152.
Dean of Lismore's Book, 234.
"Debility of Ultonian Warriors," 107.
Dechtire, 18.
Deirdre, story of, 8-11.
Delany, Mrs. 156.
"*De Matribus Sanctorum Hiberniae*," 48.
Deoch, Queen, 29.
Derricke's *Image of Ireland*, 63*n*.
Diarmuid, 11-14.
Dillon, Sister Cicely of St. Francis, 132, 134, 135, 144, 145.
Dillon, Mère Dorothée de la Croix, 222.
Dillon, Sister Mary of St. Joseph, 132.
Dillon, Sir Luke, 135.
Dillon, Viscount, 132, 136*n*., 144*n*.
Diorruing, 12.
Dirge of Art O'Leary, 235-239.
"Dogh-a-dores," 67.
Dominicans, at Athenry, 95, 213; expelled from Galway, 161; established at Dublin, 163.
Donatus, St., of Fiesole, 41.
Donegal, monastery of, founded, 74; desecrated, 186.

Donogue, River, 79, 80.
Ní Donnegáin Maíre, 241.
Douai, Irish College at, 89.
Dowcra, 185.
Dowdall, Sister Mary Peter, 132.
Doyne, Dr., 181.
Dress of Irish lady, 67; of townswomen, 83.
Drinks, various kinds of, 66.
Drogheda, Poor Clares at, 137; Tertiaries at, 138; Dominican nuns at, 164; storming of, 100.
Dromdraoidheachta, 11.
Dublin, hospitality of Mayors of, 96; Poor Clares in, 134, 136, 154, 156.
Dunboy, Siege of, 175.
Dun-Dealgán, 22.
Dunkirk, English Benedictines at, 165, 167, 169; Irish Poor Clares at, 133.
Dunne, Father Thady, O.P, 130.
Dursey Island, 174, 175.

Eibhlin a Ruin, story of, 77, 78.
Eithne, mother of St. Columcille, 50; wife of King Cormac, 109; meaning of name, 3.
Eithne the Fair, daughter of King Laoghaire, 44.
Elizabeth, St., 31.
Emain Macha, 20, 21.
Emer, story of, 16-24; *Lament* of, 18; meaning of name, 13.
" Entrenchment of New Ross," 83, 84.
Eochaid, King, 2.
Erc, Bishop, 53, 54.
Etain, Princess, 2, 107.
Eustace, Sister Brigid Anthony, 133.

Fabliaux, 16.
" Fairy Music," 27, 29.
Falkland, Lord Deputy and Lady, 134.
" Famine and Fortresses," 120.
Famine in Munster, 171.
Fanchea, St., 40.
Fand, 23.
Fate of the Children of Lir, 26.
Fedelm " of the Fresh Heart," 21.
Feilimy " the Ruddy," 44.
Fenians, 12.
Fergus MacRoich, 8, 9, 17, 25, 26.
Fiachra, 26, 28-30.
Fiall, 19.
Finabhair, daughter of Medbh, 24; meaning of name, 1.
Findbennach, 6.
Findchoem, 17, 23.
Fionn, 11-15.
Fionnghuala, story of, 26-30; meaning of name, 1.
Fitzgerald, Brigid, 186, 195-197, 201.
Fitzgerald, Lady Eleanor, 72, 73.
Fitzgerald, Gerald, adventures of, 73.
Fitzgerald, Lady Margaret, 70-72.
Fitzgerald, Father Thomas, 196.
Fitzlaurence, Sister Margaret, 150.
" Flight of the Earls," 179, 186.
Forgall, 20, 21
Foster-Mothers, 119.
" Four Masters," *see Annals of.*
Frauendienst, 16, 17.
Frauenritter, 17.
" Free Quarters," 261-262.
French, Arthur, 152.
French, Mary, 159.
French, Father Gregory, O.P., 157.

Gaelic names of women, meaning of, 1, 3.
Galway, Abbey of St. Augustine in, 88; Dominican nuns of, 157-159; expulsion of inhabitants of, 102; St. Brigid's hospital in, 89; Mayors of,

88, 90 ; munificent women of, 88, 89 ; Poor Clares of, 139, 145, 150, 153 ; school of, 90 ; Statutes of, 90 ; sufferings of women of, 104.
Gaydon, Major, 217, 219.
Geasa of Diarmuid, 12 ; of Cuchulainn, 23.
" General Feasts of Bestowing," 68.
Gerald, Earl of Kildare, 70, 71.
Gergenn, father of St. Senan, 58.
Gernon, Luke, a *Discourse of Ireland* by, 65, 83, 115-117.
Girls, modesty of Irish, 67.
Giraldus Cambrensis, 63.
Gobnait, St., of Ballyvourney, 41.
Godsun, Nicholas, 95.
Gormlaith, Queen, story of, 231, 234.
Grace-Dieu, monastery of, 129.
Gráinne, story of, 11-15 ; meaning of name, 3.
Granard Bells, 242.

Hagan, Mgr., quoted, 205.
Hamilton, Madame Elizabeth, 152.
Hamilton, Lady, 154.
Hanmer, 63.
Hardiman, 245, 247.
Harold's Cross, Poor Clares at, 157.
Harold, Father Francis, 92.
Harpers present at feasts, 66 ; Festival of, at Belfast, 242.
Henri de Loundres, 36.
Henry IV (of France), 187.
d'Héricault, *Les Mères des Saints* by, 47.
Holing, Father, 88, 129, 177.
Home Life in Ireland, purity of, 34.
Hore, Matthew, and his family, 264.
Hospitals, 89.
Hospitality in Ireland, 67, 68, 70, 96.
Hyde, Dr. Douglas, *Love Songs of Connacht*, 231, 241-243.

Iosagán, St. Ita's Hymn to, 39.
Inghin Dubh, account of, 75-77.
Ireland, condition of in St. Brigid's time, 36, 37.
Irish Language spoken by Poor Clares, 138.
Ita, St., 38-40, 52.
Iveagh, Lady (of Kilcash), 211, 212, 215.
Iveagh, Viscount (Brian Mac Gennis), 215.

Jan der Walle, 133.
Jesuits in Ireland, 86, 122, 123.
Jonyne, Sister Margaret Clare, 145.
Joyce, Margaret, 89.

Kavanagh, Eibhlin, love story of, 77, 78.
Keating, 68, 106.
Kildare, fire of, 36.
Kilkenny, school at, 76, 91 ; *Statutes* of, 129.
Killeigh, Convent of, 69, 74.
Kirwan, Sir John, 152.
Kirwan, Sister Margaret, 152.

Laeg, charioteer of Cuchulainn, 23.
Lairgnen, King, 29.
Ni Laoghaire, Máire, 241.
" Lanamnas fir for bantinacur," 6.
Lee, Captain Thomas, 254.
Legge, Dame, 165-167.
Lendabair, 21.
Liadain and Curithir, 230, 231.
Lichtenstein, Ulrich von, 16, 17.
Limerick, Arthurs of, 86 ; women of, 105 ; school of, 90.
Loch Dairbhreach, 27.
Lombard, Anastasia, 93, 94.
Lombard, Peter, 93, 191
Lombard, Robert, spy, 183.
Loughrea, Poor Clares at, 143.

Louis XV, of France, 220, 221.
Louise, Madame, 220-225.
Louth, Lady, 265.
Louvain, 189, 192, 193, 198, 203.
Love, conception of in Ancient Irish Romances, 8, 11; Cuchulainn's, for Emer, 19; marriages of, not frequent among Irish aristocrats, 77; love-making in Irish towns, 85.
Lugaid, 20.
Lynch, Sister Elizabeth Baptist, 146.
Lynch, Mother Maria, 159.
Lynch, *Cambrensis Eversus*, by, 103.
Lynch, Life of Bishop Kirwan, by, 103.
Lynches of Galway, 95.

Macaulay, Lord, quoted, 209.
MacAinghil, Aodh, O.F.M., 182.
MacAlindon, Mary, 241, 242.
MacDermott, Una, story of, 78-81.
MacDermott, Madame, 247, 248.
MacEgan, Father Stephen, O.P., 164.
MacFirbis, Duald, 68, 74, 134, 138.
MacGeoghegan, L'Abbé, 180, 195, 196, 201, 211.
MacGeoghegan, Father Anthony O.F.M., 139.
Macha, 24, 108.
MacMahon, Dr. Eugene, 188.
MacMahon, Fr. Gelasius, 216.
MacMahon, Mere Julie de Jésus, 223-225.
MacMahon, Madame, 224-225.
MacMahon, Seumas, 191.
Macniseus, Bishop, 48.
MacSwiney, Donald, 174.
MacSwiney, Johanna, *see* O'Sullivan.
Magaen, Honoria, a Dominican Tertiary, 130.
Magrath, Father Owen Groome, 195.
Magrath, Rory, 253.
Maguire, Cuchonnacht, 187, 191.
Maguire, Judith, 33.
Maguire, Mary, 246, 247.
Mantles, 118, 178.
Maria Theresa, Empress, 226, 227.
Marriage Feasts, 87.
Martin, *Histoire de France*, by, 205.
Martin, Kate, woman harper, 242.
Martin, Mother Mary Gabriel, 139.
Martin, Richard, 152.
Mary Beatrice, Queen, 210, 211.
"Mayor of Bullring," 85, 87.
Medbh (Maeve), Queen, 4-7, 24, 248; meaning of name, 3.
Meehan, Rev. Charles, 181, 194, 205.
Meyer, Kuno, 231.
Ni Mháille, Gráinne, 250-252.
Milligan, Alice, *Hero Lays* by, 15.
Misset, Captain, 217-220.
Misset, Madame, 217-220.
Mitchel, John, quoted, 210.
Mochaemog, St., 29, 38.
Mochua, St., of Balla, father and mother of, 60.
Mooney, Father Donat, O.F.M., 74, 190.
Mooney, Rose, a woman harper, 242.
Moore, Sister Margaret Evangelist, 144, 145.
Moran, Cardinal, *Spicilegium Ossoriense* by, 206.
Morgan, John, of Galway, 152.
Morrison, *Threnodia Hiberno-Catholica*, 206.
Moryson, Fynes, 63, 120.
Mother love, 24.
Muirgeal, meaning of name, 1.
Muirne, meaning of name, 1.
"Mullagham," 118.

Naisi, 8.
Nantes, 204, 205.

Nessa (Niassa), story of, 25, 26.
New Ross, Women of, 83.
Niall Glundubh, 232, 233.
Niamh, 23; meaning of name, 3.
Nieuport, Irish Poor Clares at, 133.
Ninnidh, "Pure Hand," 35.
Nolan, Mother Juliana, 159-162.
Nugent, Sister Magdalen of St. Clare, 132.
Nuns in exile at Nantes, 205.

O'Brien, Finola, account of, 74, 75.
O'Byrne, Turlough, 254.
O'Byrne, Fiach, 252-256.
O'Cahan, story of wife of, 263.
O'Calanan, Father Hugo, O.P., 163.
O'Carolan, Turlough, 246-248.
O'Carroll, Margaret, 68-70.
O'Carroll, Dr. Domhnall, 192.
O'Cianan, Tadg, 186-188.
O'Clery, Michael, 134-138.
O'Connell, Alice (Seggerson,) 239, 240.
O'Connell, Eibhlin Dubh, 235-239.
O'Connell, Gobnait, 226.
O'Connell, Máire Ní Dúibh, 226, 239, 240.
O'Connell, Mrs. Morgan John, 225.
O'Connell, Nancy, 226.
O'Conor, Sister Apollonia, 149.
O'Conor, Fahy, Calvach, 68, 69.
O'Conor, Finola, 73, 74, 127.
O'Conor, Sligo, Poem to, 61.
O'Daly, Carroll, 78.
O'Daly, Father Teig, O.P., 214.
O'Doherty, Sir Cahir, 77, 185, 198.
O'Doherty, Lady Rosa, 180, 201-204.
O'Donnell, Aodh Ruadh, 75-77.
O'Donnell, Cathbar, 191, 201, 202.
O'Donnell, Count John, 227.
O'Donnell, Joseph, 227.
O'Donnell, Manus, 72, 73.
O'Donnell, Manus (brother of Aodh Ruadh), 186.
O'Donnell, Manus (son of Nuala), 185.
O'Donnell, Manus, General, 227.
O'Donnell, Mary (*alias* Stuart), 196-201.
O'Donnell, Neachtan, 185.
O'Donnell, Niall Garbh (husband of Finola O'Conor), 73.
O'Donnell, Niall Garbh (husband of Nuala), 75, 77, 184-186.
O'Donnell, Nuala, 179, 184-195.
O'Donnell, Ruairi, 186, 191.
O'Donnell, Theresa, 227.
O'Donnells in Austria, 227.
O'Dornin, Tadg, 241, 242.
O'Driscoll, Cornelius, 175, 176.
O'Flannery, Thomas, 3.
O'Halloran, Mother Mary, 158.
O'Heyne, 158, 161, 213, 215.
O'Hosey, Eochy, 251.
Oisin, 12, 14.
O'Leary, Art, 236-239.
O'Meara, Father William, O.F.M. 155.
O'More, Ruairi, wife of, 257.
O'Neill, Aodh (Baron of Dungannon), 191, 201-203.
O'Neill, Arthur, harper, 242.
O'Neill, Brian, 190.
O'Neill, Brigid, 182.
O'Neill, Countess Catherine, 179-182.
O'Neill, Col. Henry, 186, 188, 189.
O'Neill, Father James, 145.
O'Neill, Owen Roe, 201-203.
O'Raghailligh, Father Aodh, 138.
O'Rahilly, Tomás, *Dánta Grádha*, 244.
O'Reilly, Dr., Irish physician at St. Denis, 225.
O'Reilly, Biddy, woman harper, 242.
O'Roney, Niall, 253.
O'Ryan, Dame Mary Josepha, 165-169, 173, 212.

Oscar, 12, 14.
O'Shiel, Hugh, 259.
O'Shiel, Dr. Owen, 258.
O'Siaghail, Father Seumas, 138.
Ostia, Irish lords poisoned at, 191.
O'Sullivan, Diarmuid (father of Philip), 173-177.
O'Sullivan, Domnhall (of Beare), 173-176.
O'Sullivan, Johanna (wife of Diarmuid), 173-175.
O'Sullivan, Philip (historian), 121, 173-177, 254, 257.
O'Sullivan, Major, 226.
O'Sullivan, Morty Oge, *Dirge* on, 119.
O'Toole, Captain, 217.
O'Toole, Rosa, 252-256.
O'Toole, Una, 251.

Patrick, St., 43, 44, 111.
Penal Days, 131, 162, 166, 237.
"Perilous Glen," 18.
Perrott, Sir John, 251.
Peter of Trau, Friar, 131.
Philip II, 172-176.
Philip IV, 144.
"Plain of Ill-Luck," 18.
Plunkett, Catherine, 164.
Poets, "Secret language of," 230.
Pontoise, Benedictines of, 166, 167, 216; Carmel of, 222.
Poor Clares, 132-157.
Power, Sister Mary, 133.
Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement*, 201, 265.
Preston, General, 258.
"Propaganda," English, 63.
"Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne," 11.

Raleigh, 237, 238.
"Reformation," Four Masters' Definition of, 126.
"Report on State of Popery," 163.
Rich, Barnaby, 87.
Rinuccini, 134, 157.
Roche, Catherine, 205.
Roche, Jordan, daughters of, 266.
Roche, Viscount, and family, 265.
Rochefort, Father Robert, 133.
Rome, Salviati Palace in, 181-183, 191; Irish exiles in, 191; San Pietro in Montorio, 192.
Ross-Errily, Franciscan Chapter at, 74.
Rouen, 187, 188.
Russell, Sir William, 253, 254.

Sanders, Dr., 174.
Sarsfield, Patrick, Earl of Lucan, 215.
Sarsfield, Patrick, Mayor of Dublin, 96-98.
Scathach, 18, 248.
Schlesestadt, 218.
Schools, 90, 91.
Scoithín, meaning of name, 3.
Scythe-chariot, 21.
Sea of Moyle, 27, 28.
Searbhan Lochlannach, 14.
Sedna, father of St. Comghall, 49.
Senan, St., of Inis Cathaig, 58, 59.
Sencha, 17, 21, 22.
Senchus Mór quoted, 6.
Sigerson, Dr., 234, 263.
Sister's love, 26, 40.
Skerrett, Sisters Ellis and Elizabeth, 152, 154.
Spain, Irish refugees in, 144, 158, 172.
Spanish, Irish nuns' proficiency in, 138, 148, 158.
Spenser, 63, 112, 119, 120, 124, 171, 261.
St. Denis, Irish nuns at, 221.
St. Germain-en-Laye, 211, 212, 215, 221, 224.
St. Malo, 177-179.
Saint-Simon, quoted, 212.
Stafford, Father, 142, 143.

Stanihurst, Richard, 63, 67, 71-73, 85, 87, 96.
Sydney, Sir Henry, 251.

Tadg Dall, 61.
Táin, 3, 4-7, 6.
Teamhair (Tara), 11, 12.
" Tertiaries," 130, 138.
Tennyson, 245.
" Tripartite Life of St. Patrick," 43.
Tuatha de Danaan, 27.
Tully, Matthew, 188.
Turnbull, English agent, 194.
Tyrrell, Richard, daughters of, 258.
Tyrrell, Catherine, 258-260.

Una Bhán, 78.
Urban VIII, *brief* of, 199-200.
" Usquebath," 67.
Usnach, sons of, 10, 11.

" Valentines," 85.
Ventry Harbour, Battle of, 234.
de Vere, Aubrey, 43.
Villani, Filippo, 41.

Wadding, Fr. Luke, 92, 93, 197.
Waddings of Waterford, 91, 92.
Walsh, Rev. A., O.S.A., 204.
Walsh, Rev. Paul, 180, 195.
" War of Words of Women of Ulster," 22.
Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill, 261.
Wars of Turlough, 131.
Waterford, leading families of, 92, 93; Poor Clares of, 143; Dominican Nuns at, 165.
Wedir, David, 95.
Wentworth, Lady, 137.
Wexford, massacre of women at, 101; Poor Clares at, 142.
White, Peter, 91.
Wogan, Charles, 217-220.
Womanhood, ideal of, in ancient Ireland, 3; " six gifts of," 3, 18.
Women warriors, 18; education of women, *ib*
" Women's Parting Cry, The," 210.
à Wood, Thomas and Anthony, 100.
Woodstock Castle, 258-259.
Wooing of Emer, 3, 16.
Wyse, Mother Mary Anastasia, 165.

" Youngmen," Captain of the, 85.
Ypres, Benedictine Abbey at, 165-169.

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